MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE

WELLS

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BY

BENJAMIN W. WELLS, PH.D.

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PREFACE.

THE botanist, as he wanders through our woods, is attracted alike by the fungus and the flower, and the seed-vessel is more to him than the blossom. So, with studious eyes intent, the philologists search through the German poets' grove, "Der Deutsche Dichterwald," and grub the specimens for their herbaria. Even the cryptogamous forms of literature, the glosses and the interlinear versions, have here their charm and place, while the triumphs of culture may be to them less valuable materials than the growths of untutored nature. So, too, there is a point of view from which it is as interesting, perhaps more interesting, to dissect a savage than a philanthropist, the Ormulum than the Adonaïs. There is a sense in which Shakspere and Goethe are products, as much as M. Taine's virtue and vice, sugar and vitriol, as much as the religious weekly or the American magazine. A scientific analysis or synthesis is profitable and useful in literature; but when it is exhaustive it is apt to be exhausting, and when it affects to

despise the study of literature for æsthetic enjoyment it becomes injurious to the development of popular culture. Surely it is right and helpful to pluck the flowers of literature without grubbing for their roots. For while no doubt the study of these roots and of the soil from which they draw their nourishment may lead a chosen few to a deeper knowledge than others will attain, experience tells us that the majority of those who have set out, like Hylas, to find the stream that runs by philology's shrine have tripped over so many of these roots that they have had no time to waste "with the flowers on the margin," while their "light urns" have been left quite as empty as his.

This book, then, is not for the learned specialist, nor for him who aspires to become one, but rather for those to whom, as to the great majority of our college students, German literature is a pleasant avocation, a secondary means of culture.

What does such a well-educated foreigner care to know about German literature? That is what most of our university men have to ask themselves, and this book is an attempt at an answer whose correctness others must determine. Evidently most cultured foreigners will never be Germanists. They will want to know, not about the "Muspilli" or the "Wessobrunn Prayer," but, first of all, about what men are writing and reading now, and then about what they continue to read of the works of older generations.

Now, except perhaps the Nibelungenlied, there is little if anything printed before Lessing's "Literary Letters" (1759) that educated Germans read for literary enjoyment to-day, and there is very little before that time of which a cultured foreigner, not a specialist, needs or cares to know. And yet in the current literary histories rather more than half the space is usually given to the earlier periods, and in great part to men who live chiefly in the memory of those whose profession it is to explore musty catacombs and fill antiquarian journals.

There are, indeed, aspects of this earlier literature that fall naturally within the scope of a more general culture. The interdependence of literature and politics in Germany is very curious and suggestive. Luther is still a name to conjure with, and Wagner has reawakened a wide interest in the Nibelungen saga and in Parzival and Tristan. Still, even here I have labored to be brief in my introductory chapter, and have preferred to be incomplete rather than obscure.

Then I have tried to show how Klopstock, Wieland, and Herder herald the new era, while the great reformer, Lessing, prepares the way for the universal literature of Goethe and Schiller, the German classic authors of whom we read and hear most to-day, and shall for some time to come. Nearly half the volume is given to these, and, as is fitting, more to Goethe than to Schiller. If Richter and the Roman-

tic School then claim a chapter, it is less because these men, now lapped in their own lead, have an intrinsic interest, than because unless we know what they were it is hard to understand what Heine became. And Heine has peculiar claims on our intelligent study, because this last great German poet was the first who was in touch with the distinctive moving forces of our modern life. It is only when we come to see the relations of our thought to his that we can comprehend how he is separated from Goethe more widely than Goethe from us. Finally, I have devoted a chapter to modern novels and dramas because these are almost the only forms of contemporary imaginative literature that continue to be generally read, whether at home or abroad, and I have not wished to dwell on any writer who to a cultured foreigner would probably be only a shadowy name.

In a book whose sole purpose is to further literary appreciation and enjoyment, a learned and critical apparatus would be superfluous and impertinent. I have spoken of no book that I do not know at first hand, but my judgment has often been influenced, sometimes directed, by the great German critics, especially by my "Collegienhefte" of Professor Scherer's lectures in Berlin, between 1877 and 1880, and by his admirable "Litteraturgeschichte." I have consulted also Gervinus and Schmidt, seldom without profit, and the standard biographies, as will be seen

from occasional foot-notes. I have quoted and paraphrased from them and from others wherever it seemed desirable; for my modest ambition has been less to be original than to be helpfully suggestive to the lovers of pure literature.

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MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGINS.

Every literature has its periods of flourishing and of decay. Like the political life of a nation, and often in connection with it, the literary life ebbs and flows, rises and falls. And in none of the great literatures of Europe is this so clearly marked as in the German. At the beginning of the seventh century, as the Teutonic tribes, upborne by the triumphs of the great migration, looked down on conquered Rome and rested for a time on their laurels, the forces that had been engaged in that struggle of arms turned to the literary glorification of its experiences. A distinctively national epic literature appeared in Germany, almost at the same time that similar conditions were uniting to form the early Anglo-Saxon epic in England. The year six hundred, then, may mark the first blossoming of German literature.

But in the spiritual struggle that followed the political conquest, the Teutonic races were less fortunate. They could conquer the Roman legions,

they yielded to the Roman church; and their intellectual forces were diverted to its service in ever increasing measure. The old national poetry was forgotten, perhaps even despised, by the monks of the cloister, and the wandering singer was no longer "high placed in hall, a welcome guest," as he had been before monasteries and monastic records gave a title to posthumous fame that promised to be more enduring than the memorial of his songs.

So the literature that had been national in the seventh century was from the beginning of the tenth thoroughly catholic, general. The epic lives of Christ, the Saxon "Heliand," or the High-German "Krist" of Otfrid, are sometimes spirited and poetic, but they are not distinctively German. Indeed it was not until, beneath the energetic sceptre of the Ottos, the Germans began to feel once more the dignity of their national individuality that they reached back again instinctively to their own earlier traditions, to their peculiar independent sources of inspiration. Then, six hundred years after the first outburst of national song, the popular epic wells up again in the splendid beauty of "Gudrun" and the "Nibelungenlied." This is the century of the "Volks-epos;" the whole nation is aglow with high political aspirations, full of overflowing strength.

But for the second time we see these lofty hopes deceived. For as the Roman church had moulded to its ends the spiritual forces that made the first national epic possible, so now the Roman law, trans-

formed and petrified into the feudal system, was to blight the intellectual fruitage of the German nation. The upper classes, the nobles, under its influence, separated themselves more and more from their followers and from the peasants, and, while the latter became coarser and more material, the former grew more refined, but less broadly human. Literature remained with the nobles, it tended to become their peculiar possession, but it was in a new form. The court epic and its subjects no longer had their roots in the national glories of a legendary past; they were rather the graceful figments of a foreign fancy. Now it will be the court of Arthur of which they sing, some Welsh fable, or a legend from Geoffrey of Monmouth's "little book," or perhaps it will be the mystic story of the Grail with its Celtic ideals of spiritual knighthood, or it may be the siege of Troy and the campaigns of Alexander that claim their attention. And if by chance the subject should be their own German emperor, Charlemagne, they will treat him in the same spirit that they did the Macedonian, and send him travelling to Constantinople on a fool's errand.

More beautiful in form, more philosophical in conception, this courtly epic had no root in the popular consciousness, and therefore in the next century it died gradually away of over-refinement and exhaustion, so that the year 1500 found literature at an ebb perhaps even lower than the tenth century could show. Naturally this manifested itself most clearly in poetry. That highest form of imaginative litera-

ture now "ceases to belong to the order of the day, it is of no general interest to the people; it has become a means of agitation, a tool of political schemers, or a purveyor of coarsest entertainment. It is indeed not without productive power in matter of invention. It uses up a vast amount of material, and creates a few moral types, mostly results of hate or jest, and often of a grandiose conception. But it lacks the charm of form, it is too ephemeral, too indifferent to external beauty. . . . It transfers to a more fortunate generation the best that it has, as mere formless material." [1]

Here, again, literary decay coincides with, and seems to depend on, the decay of national power. The Reformation cost Germany her political preeminence for well-nigh three centuries and a half. The conditions that produced and succeeded it could not but be fatal to the development of literary art. But the tide rose again when the German heart was enlarged by the glorious struggles and victories of Frederic II. German literature responded to the national spirit and celebrated its third and greatest triumph in the age of Goethe, while to-day the tide seems to have ebbed again as quickly as it rose.

Few phenomena in the literary history of the world are so remarkable as the outburst of that splendid

[1] Scherer, "Litteraturgeschichte." To this book and to "Collegienhefte" of Scherer's Berlin lectures in the years 1877–1880 this chapter is indebted, directly or indirectly, on almost every page. While independence of critical judgment has been sought in every case, the author is probably more indebted to his first and chief instructor in this field than even he himself is aware.

galaxy of literary genius, after the wars of the great Frederic had given breath once more to the stifled giant of German nationality. It was as if the pent-up energies of three centuries of repression had broken loose to flood the world with light. The peculiarity of these conditions invites a treatment of German literature to which the French or our own would ill submit. The English has a consistent, steady development from Chaucer to Tennyson, seldom without a poet of the first rank, or without masters of prose. The French, too, has had a succession of reputable names that link in unbroken chain the days of Villehardouin in the thirteenth century to the masters of our own. It is true we speak of a classical period both in French and in English literature, but there is no such contrast between the age of Louis XIV., or of Elizabeth, and the times that went before or followed, as there is in Germany between the age of Goethe and the five centuries that preceded it. In no great literature save the German do we see such abandonment of past achievements and such laborious regaining of former conquests. For this reason it is possible to appreciate and understand German literature since the days of Frederic II., independently of what went before, to a degree that would be impossible in French literature were one to begin his study with Voltaire, or in English should one begin with Fielding. Hence it is not without justification in the nature of the case that those to whom the study of German is an avocation and a subsidiary means of culture should be content with

a brief review of the earlier time, that they may concentrate their critical attention and æsthetic appreciation upon the century that begins with Lessing and ends with Heine. Such a brief review of the origins of that culminating century is the purpose of this chapter.

Of the first epic period, its songs of heroes and their deeds, and of the mythology of their warrior gods, such scanty remnants are preserved that one might say it has practically perished past recovery. Yet from a fragment of a song of Hildebrand and his single combat with Hadubrand, his own son, and still more from English and Norse poems of similar character and from the later German poetry, it is clear that the first blossoming of German literature was of great force and rugged beauty. No contemporaneous effort was made to commit this poetry to writing. That permanence was for the present reserved for the service of religion. The first Teutonic book was the translation of the Bible made by Bishop Wulfila (Ulfilas) for the West Goths on the Danube. Books have their fates, and a very beautiful manuscript of this work, which, though now incomplete, is thought by some to be contemporary with the good bishop himself, is after many vicissitudes preserved to-day in the library of the University of Upsala, in the opposite corner of Europe.

It was after the first outburst of German song that the dispersion of the Teutonic tribes, fostering diversity of dialects, led to the segregation of the High Germans, whose literary development immedi-

ately concerns us here. But among them in this early period literary activity, at least so far as it found record in writing, was almost exclusively monastic in origin and religious in purpose. Gospel harmonies in verse and prose, versions of portions of the choir offices, engaged the chief attention of the monastic *literati*, who exercised their imaginations on "Visions of Judgment," or more frequently on the fanciful legends of their patron saints, and allowed themselves at rare intervals to be diverted by the worldly interests of their cloister to such political subjects as the patriotic "Ludwigslied," or "Song of King Louis."

A really intelligent interest in national poetry was, however, one of the titles to greatness of the magnanimous Charles and his cultured counsellor the English Alcuin. It is a fair and worthy witness to the catholic mind of the noblest mediæval emperor that while he was bending every effort to the conversion of the still heathen Saxons, and fostering translations into the vernacular of sermons and catechetical instructions and of the Gospel narrative, he was at the same time collecting with zealous care the relics of the old heathen poetry. But a narrower and more bigoted age suffered this priceless treasure of antiquity to perish, though it preserved a vast amount of that proselytizing literature for an age to which it seems indeed outworn, while the recovery of the epic songs of Charlemagne, like that of the lost books of Tacitus and Livy, remains the unfulfilled dream of the scholar.

From the eighth century until the crusades, the German literature that has been preserved to us can hardly be regarded as equal in value to that produced in England or in France during the same period. There was perhaps nothing then written there that would be read for its own intrinsic interest and literary worth to-day, as we still read the "Chanson de Roland" or the Anglo-Saxon "Cross." Not until the German people felt again the pulses of a reawakened national life did their literature strike its roots once more deep in the popular heart. The immediate political cause of this reawakening of national pride was the broad policy of Otto and Barbarossa, who revived in German minds a consciousness of their great mission that had slumbered since the death of Charlemagne. But more than this, the far-reaching plans of these rulers had brought their subjects into intimate contact with the more advanced culture of the South and West, and by this the German nobility had become again as in the days of Theodoric the centre of German literary life. Under their refining influence grew up the delicately modulated Middle-High-German dialect, a language pre-eminently fitted for poetic expression. And the instrument that lay so temptingly ready to the hand of genius was soon put to use in lyrics of love and epic ballads of heroism. Soon the standard of the courts reacted on the people. Already in the eleventh century there is evidence of growing refinement in popular literary taste; for, though the best secular literature was still probably in Latin, there were German religious epics

that showed a very considerable development. These deal with subjects from the Scriptures, with the crucifixion and death of Christ, with the legends of the various Marys, and with the exodus of Israel; or the monastic author will dwell, with reminiscences of chivalrous days, on the adventurous expedition of Judith, and, in still freer fancy, will contrast the joys of this fleeting life with the horrors of eternal death.

German literature had reached this stage in its development when the crusades came to open new avenues to adventure and new horizons to imagination. The renewed struggle with the heathen recalled the days of Charlemagne and Roland; contact with the East revived the memories of Alexander's adventures. The result was immediate. In 1130 the French epics of Roland and of the great Macedonian were already done into German. And the native poets were quick to catch the new spirit in tales of travel and warlike adventure, in the main clearly the direct result of the crusades. Such a pseudo-historical epic is "Rother," whom the poet makes a grandfather of Charlemagne, though he is in fact a study from the Norman Roger of Sicily. A second and perhaps more famous epic tale is "Herzog Ernst," who is historically a combination of the rebellious Ludolf, son of the Emperor Otto, with Ernst, Duke of Bavaria, who was also a rebel. But in the poet's hands Ernst has become a crusader and wandering Ulysses, rivalling Sindbad the Sailor in his fabulous adventures among pygmies, giants, cyclops, and mag-

netic mountains. Another German Ulysses is King Orendel, and similar traits can be found in the German version of the legend of an Irish saint, Brendan. Even the English martyr, King Oswald, becomes in the hands of the Bavarian poet an amorous, half-comic crusader.

This free treatment of the legends of the saints is noteworthy, for it implies a less serious view of life and its issues. And that was the natural result of the crusades, which could not but make the crusaders more tolerant. Religion during this period is coming to be looked at less as an alterative than as an anodyne. One of the crusading poets remarks in a jest that hides a truth, which he sees, but perhaps would still hesitate to think, at least aloud, that at Acre he could not distinguish Jews, Christians, or heathen. This is the age when Frederic II. and Saladin contend for the palm of magnanimity, while the great poets of the century, Walther and Wolfram, anticipate Lessing's "Nathan der Weise" in their philosophic conception and bold teaching of universal toleration. Arabians, Jews, and Germans join at the Emperor's Sicilian court to open the treasures of Aristotle to the Western world. It was indeed a wonderful age, a time of broad horizons and distant prospects, which were veiled too soon and for centuries by the cold and selfish policy of the Roman curia, that saw in Frederic II. its most dangerous enemy, struck from his hand the lamp of culture, brought to naught his far-reaching plans, and pressed back the swelling tide of the German spirit

till it should break for itself new paths at the Reformation.

This inspiring thirteenth century, that found its political incarnation in Frederic, has left its literary monuments also. Growing ever more self-conscious, more national, through the closing years of the twelfth century, German poetry greets us on the threshold of the thirteenth with the "Nibelungenlied," its Iliad, an epic second only to that masterpiece, and soon to be followed by "Gudrun," a veritable German Odyssey. But the first quarter of this century is to give us also the philosophical epics of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the less thoughtful but more popular epic tales of Hartmann von Aue, and the exquisite songs of Walther von der Vogelweide, surrounded by the melodious chorus of the "Minnesangsfrühling," the "Springtime of the songs of love," as this period has been poetically named. The whole makes up one of the most remarkable phenomena of the intellectual life, to be compared to "the spacious times of great Elizabeth," and, like this, finding its cause and explanation in the political life and aspirations of the people, as indeed the last great literary epoch of Germany would have been impossible but for the inspiration of that greater Frederic, king of Prussia and truly king of men.

The masterpieces of this wonderful generation fall almost holly between 1190 and 1220. They may be divided broadly into popular and courtly epics, while the lyrics take a middle ground. The great epic representatives of popular tradition are the

"Nibelungenlied" and "Gudrun." The former tells of the love, marriage, and widowed vengeance of Kriemhild, a Burgundian princess from the court of Worms, whose tragic story associates her with Sigfried, a mythical hero of the race of the Nibelungs from the lower Rhine, and after his death with Attila and Theodoric of Verona. But while there is thus an historical background, it is plain that chronology is thrown to the winds, and that heroes dear to the popular heart are joined together from various centuries of German history. Sigfried, who is the chief figure in the former half of the epic, has been identified by some with that Arminius who defeated Varro and the Roman legions of Augustus in the first century; and Theodoric carries us beyond the age of Attila to the sixth century.

That the legend, or rather the legends, had been long fluxed in the popular mind of the Teutonic race is clear from the form in which they meet us in Iceland, and from the allusions to them in Anglo-Saxon verse. Their main outlines are made familiar, at least in part, in our day by the operatic cycle of Wagner, though in many particulars the four operas, "Rheingold," "Sigfried," "Die Walküre," and "Die Götterdämmerung" follow the Norse rather than the distinctively German form of the story.

The latter half of the "Nibelungenlied" transfers the epic scene to the court of Attila, who has become the husband of Sigfried's widow. Its grim hero is Hagen, the counsellor of the Burgundian kings and the slayer of Sigfried, on whom his widow here takes

fearful vengeance. She beguiles her relatives and their retainers to a festival at Attila's court, and with them Hagen comes, though not beguiled, to their common destruction. In fearful struggle all are massacred at last, but the best of Attila's retainers are also slain, his son is killed, and Kriemhild, too, has perished at the hands of the outraged Theodoric.

The idea that lies at the base of this poem is noteworthy and characteristic of the people whence it sprang. Heine remarked with some bitterness that the strongest characteristic of the German nation in his day was their loyalty, their "Treue," and it is precisely the conflicting claims of double allegiance that form the springs of tragic action in the "Nibelungenlied" six hundred years before. In Kriemhild's case there is the conflict between her duty as wife and as sister. In Sigfried's it is between his duty as husband and as vassal. Rüdiger is divided between the claims of his Burgundian guests and those of Attila, his over-lord. And so throughout, faith, allegiance, "Treue" is the central thought of nearly every phase of the "Nibelungenlied."

As will have become clear, the "Nibelungenlied" naturally falls into two parts, culminating, the former in Sigfried's death, the latter in the massacre at Attila's court, but there is no unity of inner structure in either portion. Passages of the deepest feeling and pathos alternate not only with those of rugged strength, but also with what is trivial, grotesque, or even silly. Then, too, the connection of the episodes is not always clear. This is true here in a much

greater degree than in the Homeric poems, and whatever may be the final judgment in regard to these, it is hard to conceive that the "Nibelungenlied" can have been the product of a single mind. Rather does it seem a result of the editing and combining, with a freedom characteristic of the time, of epic songs that had long been current among the people, changing from generation to generation, and taking different forms in the various Germanic dialects, but caught for us, like some petrifaction of a bygone age, in the shape that it had taken in Austria, perhaps at Vienna, between the years 1190 and 1210.

Though the "Nibelungenlied" is the greatest, it is by no means the only epic formed from songs in High Germany. There is one that tells of the death of the great Gothic king, Ermenrich, of the race of the Amalungs, to which Theodoric also belonged, though many generations later. Here, however, the legends are fused, and the culmination of the "Dietrichsage" is Theodoric's conquest of Italy. Others tell of Sigfried's youthful adventures. But soon the popular epic begins to take on a local color. The High Germans grow jealous of the epic glories of the Nibelung hero from the lower Rhine, and in "Biterolf" and the "Rosengarten" they make Theodoric and Sigfried contend for the mastery, and venture at length to award the palm to the Southern champion. Gradually Sigfried becomes the sport of fancy, and the type of youthful heroism sinks at last to the Säufritz of the farm-yard and the nursery.

Another group of High German legends gathers about the Vandal brothers, Ortnit and Wolfdietrich. Here, too, the "editing" is more extensive than in the "Nibelungen," and by a series of strange geographical misunderstandings of names that possibly were already distorted in the original songs, the "editors" have taken the brothers, now to Russia, now to Rome. There is a striking similarity in the tale to the classic story of Castor and Pollux, but the special students of this literature regard conscious imitation as extremely improbable.

These stories belong wholly to High Germany and to Austria. A third group shows as clearly its Low German origin. For here the hero's home is the sea, and viking raids are his glory; but yet, by the ocean as among the hills, loyalty, faithfulness, "Treue," is the burden of the song. In this group the place of the "Nibelungen" is taken by the story of "Gudrun." The legend has a peculiar interest to Englishmen, for the time and the local color is that of the raids of Danes and Northmen on the coasts of England and Ireland. The ocean and the shore are the scene of action, and the subject is as old, and as ever new, as the story of Europa or of Helena. The suitor, noble, beloved, but rejected by jealous parents, flies with his stolen bride. Then follows the pursuit, the battle, and, in the mediæval tales, as universally, the reconciliation and the marriage; a solution which offers suggestive points of contrast to the classical conception.

The "Gudrunsaga" tells us how King Hagen of

Ireland had a daughter Hilde, passing fair, whose suitors that genial monarch was accustomed to kill or hang. But King Hettel of Denmark is not easily discouraged, and his messengers persuade the willing daughter to escape to him with them over-sea. He meets his bride on the shore, but the enraged father is in hot pursuit, and the lover has to maintain his right in a fight on the beach, that is described with great verve. Here Hettel magnanimously saves Hagen's life, and all ends in happy reconciliation.

This little tale of the wooing of Hilde is a prelude to the more pitiful story of Hilde's daughter, Gudrun, whose legend at the first is a close parallel to that of her mother. She, too, is the chosen love of a foreign prince, Herwig of Zealand. But during their betrothal, while her lover and her father are fighting the Moors, she is carried away forcibly by Herwig's rival, Hartung, Prince of Normandy. The father here, as before, pursues, and Herwig with him. Again we have a fine battle scene, but with a tragic close, for Hettel is killed, and Hartung carries away Gudrun into seven years' hard captivity, though she suffers no other violence. At last her lover and her brother, Ortwin, come to rescue her, and after some indecisive strife the reconciliation is effected, here as in Hilde's case, by the women, Gudrun and her captor's sister Ortrun.

In both parts of the "Gudrunsaga" magnanimity overcomes vengeance. It represents a higher moral development, a more Christian standard, than could be found in the "Nibelungen." And as this would

lead one to expect, there is more thoughtfulness and a deeper insight into the mixed feelings of complex human nature. Once and again we read how "sorrow and joy mingled" at some crisis of the story. But there is nothing effeminate, no sickly sentimentality, in "Gudrun" as there is in some of the later related epics. And together with these evidences of higher culture we find a more delicate humor. As the "Gudrun" has nothing to parallel the rollicking burlesque of Gunther's wedding experiences, so the "Nibelungen" has no trait like that where Herwig, battling to rescue Gudrun and hard beset, looks anxiously to the castle battlements, fearful lest Gudrun may be a spectator of his ill fortune and find in it material for reproach if ever they are united.

The "Gudrun," then, is truer to the culture of the thirteenth century, and shows greater psychological insight than the "Nibelungen," but it was less popular in High Germany, the section which was coming more and more to have the literary pre-eminence. It naturally appealed less to the popular taste from the very fact that it was a more artistic masterpiece, and, besides, it was not of their immediate country and people; it was more foreign in its scenes and heroes, more so, indeed, than the half Danish epic of Beowulf had ever been to the English. The "Nibelungen," even in its existing states, for there are three versions, was an essentially popular product. The "Gudrun," while it had a like origin in epic songs, had an original poet for its author, and shows a conscious plan of development. And thus it forms

a connecting link between the wholly popular epics and the foreign but more studied epics of the court, standing, perhaps, in closest literary relation to the truly national and yet thoroughly individual lyrics of Walther von der Vogelweide.

The popular epic in Germany was essentially realistic. Indeed this is true in some measure of all popular forms of literature, however fanciful. The epics of the court were in their essence more idealistic and romantic, and so more artificial. Here love, "Minne," is the mainspring of action, just as fidelity had been in the other case. This conception of chivalrous love came with much else of finer culture from France, and so naturally the first expression of literary activity in this field shows immediately its French origin. Already in the twelfth century the German knights who looked to France for their manners were able to hear singers in their own tongue tell of the loves of Floris and Blancheflor, of Tristan and Isolde, as well as of Æneas and Dido. The last tale was the first to become genuinely and widely popular, but this was due less to its own merits than to the genius of Heinrich von Veldecke, whose version of Virgil's story brought him the title of Father of Courtly Poetry. It was he that gave it its distinctive artistic form and polish, and more than all, he gave German verse true rhyme.

We may best connect Veldecke with that famous Whitsuntide of 1184, when 70,000 German knights gathered at Mayence as guests of the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa at the knighting of his sons,

Henry and Frederic. For it was about this time that Veldecke's "Eneid" was finished, and it was among the poets gathered at this festival that his supremacy was first conceded and that his reforms in German verse were recognized as worthy of study and imitation.

Like his predecessors, Lambrecht and Conrad, and like his successors, Hartmann, Gottfried, and the rest, Veldecke took his material from the French with hardly less liberty than they had shown toward their Latin originals. But the Latin proved ultimately a less congenial source of inspiration than the Celtic, and, while several writers succeeded Veldecke in his chosen field, none approached the popularity of those who turned to the legends of Arthur, of the Grail, and of Charlemagne.

Among these greater successors of Veldecke the first in time is Hartmann von Aue, whom it is convenient to connect with the crusade of 1197, in which he shared. But, while his work is older than the present form of the "Nibelungenlied," he represents a wholly different stage of literary development, a far more refined taste, and a more conventional standard of manners and morals. His style shows the danger to which this form of literature is always prone, that is, an artificial straining at effect, which appears here in the antitheses. He chooses such subjects as Gregory "the good sinner," or Henry "the royal leper." His "Eric" is divided between love of Enid and duty to king and knighthood, and his "Iwein," after a similar conflict, abandons his love at the call

of chivalry. These last two are as genuine Don Quixotes as he of La Mancha, but indeed this might be said to some extent of all the distinctively Arthurian heroes. Both "Eric" and "Iwein" were originally products of the prolific pen of Chrestien de Troyes, a Frenchman who had been a refugee at the court of Flanders, and may thus have been brought to the attention of the German poet. But in his treatment of Chrestien's material Hartmann is very free. He softens, refines, glozes. He is more conventional, Chrestien is more natural, more Gaulois. And, as befitted his conventionality, Hartmann had a more perfect mastery of form than had yet been seen in Germany. He wholly discards the strophe, and in the couplet he finds free space to develop his epic conceptions more perfectly than the popular poets had ever done.

This was recognized in his own lifetime as his chief title to fame and emulation by the greatest of his rivals, Gottfried von Strassburg, who is Hartmann's inferior only because he carries to excess the qualities that are still virtues in the elder poet. His antithetical mode of expression becomes in Gottfried a teasing mannerism. Yet it would be unjust to pass lightly over the really wonderful polish and delicacy of his verse and the playful ease of these very antithetical elaborations. In him the court epic becomes more artificial, and, as is natural in a developing art, more subjective. These characteristics would seem to fit Gottfried more than any other poet of the time to treat the legend of Tristan and Isolde, a tale

that had interested the earliest of the court poets more than half a century before.

To this legend, known throughout Europe and through all the Middle Ages, Gottfried gave its final and most artistic form, for in this tale of irresistible and unresisting love he had found precisely the subject for his overwrought genius. The scene is alternately Cornwall and Ireland. Tristan, the hero, is a pattern of knightly graces and accomplishments, Isolde, his lady-love, is a type of courtly frailty; and the tragic end of their unreflecting love is made rather a reproach to the world than to their own hearts. Indeed, Gottfried does not hold them morally responsible for a love which, according to the received standards must be called guilty, nor therefore for the consequences of their love. For Gottfried represents in his ethics a sophistical age, in which the catholic, ascetic theory existed unquestioned, side by side with a practice of life that wholly ignored and neglected it.

Gottfried died in 1210. In him the courtly epic begun about 1170 by Eilhard of Oberge, advanced by Heinrich von Veldecke, reaching its summit in Hartmann von Aue, begins its over-refinement and so prepares for its decline, which was very speedy after Gottfried's death. But contemporary with these, though aside from them, there was a courtly poet who, in the judgment of his time and of ours, exceeded them all, — Wolfram von Eschenbach, whom some have not scrupled to call the greatest of German writers before Goethe.

Wolfram was a Bavarian. He must have been

born between 1160 and 1170, and he appears to have died about 1220. His style would place him between the courtly and the popular poets, with somewhat more affinity to the latter; but he shows a greater mastery of language and less respect for the traditions of vocabulary or syntax than any of his contemporaries. This may be partly accounted for by the fact, which he has himself recorded, that he could neither read nor write, for this would naturally make him a more independent thinker. He had certainly far the deepest, if not the clearest, mind of his age, but he did not lose himself in metaphysical speculation, and had more grasp on real life in his literary work than any of his contemporaries. This is the source of his constant, never failing humor. To this we owe his sometimes startling metaphors. He compares a girl to a hare, to an ant, and for her walk to a duckling. Deep-set eyes are called cisterns, and a man's hair is compared to pig's bristles. In such metaphors he approaches more than any of his German fellow-poets to the naïve Chrestien, who was his source of inspiration as well as theirs.

Wolfram began his literary life with love-songs, usually telling of the sweet sorrow of parting when the watchman warns the lovers of the unwelcome sunrise. The idea had been brought to Germany from Provence, but nowhere has it been so exquisitely treated as by Wolfram. But when he grew older he bade farewell to this rather frivolous verse. He had begun to be attracted by more serious problems than a lover's good-bye. His two chief epics, "Parzival"

and "Willehalm," both deal with great spiritual questions, with the relations of the Christians to the heathen, or with the freedom of the will and the metaphysical conception of a self-centred religion which works out its own salvation through doubt by steadfastness and honest effort.

Here both question and answer are those of Goethe's "Faust," and indeed the whole philosophy of "Parzival," in this age of Catholic supremacy, is Protestant to the core. The development of this philosophical theme gives occasion for shrewd and keen criticism of court life and of chivalry; for while Parzival represents spiritual knighthood, his half-brother, the Saracen Feirifisz, and the Christian Gawain serve as types of unspiritualized chivalry. Though Wolfram's poem is taken from Chrestien, it surpasses the French in external finish as in inner depth, and so was worthy to become, as Gottfried's was for Tristan, the final form of the Grail saga in Europe, and the foundation on which Wagner has built the supreme effort of his musical genius.

Wolfram's second epic, "Willehalm," is also French in origin and in the main historical. Here the central idea is toleration, and we read how the hero-saint was careful to bury the heathen dead with the rites of their own faith. In this poem, as in "Parzival," Wolfram's realism has led him to interweave most charming scenes of household joys and wedded love, which a lesser poet might have thought beneath the dignity of his theme. Their equal is not to be found till we come to the ripeness of Goethe's genius.

Wolfram was indeed a noble man as well as a great poet. In the simple words of his own epitaph at Eschenbach, he was "a gallant knight and a master singer."

There is no need to linger over the decline of the courtly epic. Thirty years (1190–1220) produced in quick succession all the greater works, whose entrance on the scene was accompanied by a chorus of singers, weak only by comparison. During this period almost all were translators or adapters from the French. Later, perhaps because this source failed, the poets gave a wider scope to a feebler fancy. Popular legends, and even the English story of King Oswald, passed through their transforming hands, though at best they show rather new combinations of the elements furnished by the now familiar French legends than any true originality. Among these later poems, "Titurel," a continuation of "Parzival," may be named, both because it was long regarded as the work of Wolfram himself and because it furthered the growth of the story of Parzival's son, Lohengrin, who is familiar as the hero of a popular opera.

During the thirteenth century this courtly epic slowly died away of over-production and artificiality. Imaginative literature begins to yield in interest to history. Form is less prized than matter. Thus we see reflected in literature the decay of the delicate culture that had bloomed its brief day under the magnanimous sceptre of the great Frederics, and beneath the fostering care of the German nobility, often themselves poets as well as patrons of literature.

It is curious to notice how the decay retraces the steps of the development. The poets before 1190 had been drawn at first from the clergy, then from the wandering clerks and the students. From the classic heights and the noble poets the course leads down through the professional wandering minstrels back to the clergy again, in whose hands the epic becomes homily and allegory, and soon sinks beneath notice. But while the epic was thus fading away, lyric poetry was rising to the first place in the person of Walther von der Vogelweide, the most interesting personality of this period.

Walther was an Austrian, and devoted to the cause of Duke Frederic until that prince's death, in 1198. After that he claimed a wider allegiance, and we can trace his course at various German courts until 1227, when it may be presumed that he died. He took an active part in the political struggles of his time, and was a real power in the civil wars of the period, where his influence was as much sought by his friends as it was feared by his foes. Through it all Walther was an unswerving patriot. Though he had lived in France and Italy, it is still the German ways to which his heart fondly clings. To him German men are courteous above others, and German women are angels. However much he might change his princely allegiance, it was always in obedience to a higher national patriotism, which made him an outspoken enemy of the papal power at a time when such opposition as his was a sign of rare courage. He did not scruple to call the pope "a new Judas,"

"a servant of the devil," and he was bold to attribute to him all the political ills of Germany. These convictions he spread among the people by short catches and songs that clung in the memory. The Italian Dean, Tomasin, said Walther was a demagogue. No doubt he was a political agitator, but Germany had no such lyric poet until Goethe.[1]

His followers were not his equals, except perhaps in the little love-songs that make the chief charm of this Minnesangsfrühling, the "Springtime of Love."[2] But these lyrics, many of them very beautiful and most of them set to music composed by the authors themselves, are almost without exception anonymous. It is plain that they were a fashionable occupation of cultured men who had no care for literary fame.

The fate of this lyric poetry was similar to that of the epic. It suffered first from artificiality, then from vulgarization. Ulrich von Lichtenstein typifies the first stage, Neidhart von Reuenthal the second.[3] Ulrich was a Don Quixote of chivalrous love, capable of cutting off a finger to send to his lady-love to appease her humor, a man who made a "pilgrimage" under the guise of Venus, and challenged all knights who

[1] Scherer, l. c. 209.

[2] Noteworthy and noted among them is the little gem that may serve as a specimen of the class: —

"Thou art mine, I am thine;
Let this be the certain sign;
Thou in my heart
Art locked apart,
And I 've lost the little key;
Thou must ever stay with me.

[3] Ulrich died in 1255; Neidhart in 1240.

met him to contend for the honor of his Dulcinea, — a courtier, in short, who imitated all the crack-brained fancies of Tristan in his love for Isolde, and all the time rejoiced in a wife and a numerous family at home. He led a double existence. Of his life as a a reputable pater-familias he is silent, but he has written a diary of his romantic love-fancies, his "Frauendienst," in which are numerous poems that would be charming but for their persistent artificiality of form and sentiment.

The next downward step of lyric poetry is taken when the noble poets become conscious that the sentimentalities of chivalry are inherently ridiculous, and fair game for wit. Ulrich was pathetically serious; Neidhart is a satirist. His gay dance-songs hit noble and peasant alike, but especially the latter, with a humor that is often coarse, but always delicious. And Neidhart's poetry has a social significance that should not be overlooked. Satire, to have point, must have some basis of truth. Neidhart's verses assume a prosperity among the German peasants in the thirteenth century that has never been witnessed among them since.[1] The fundamental assumption of his wit is that the peasants have wealth without culture, and the nobles culture without corresponding wealth. The incongruousness of these conditions is his standing theme. His songs are very dramatic, and in tripping dance measures they tell of the tricks played on the nut-brown country maids by the impe-

[1] This is also the date of the greatest prosperity of the English yeoman. See Rogers, "Work and Wages."

cunious and facile nobleman, a good deal in the spirit of Chaucer's Reeve.

As usual, the coarseness of Neidhart found more imitators than his wit, and in the next generation Tannhäuser (d. 1270) sacrifices completely the dignity of poetry to the itch to raise a laugh. His comic songs, which usually quite pass the limits of the decorous, are wont to end with the sudden exclamation, "Ah! I've broken the string," just at the moment when it seems impossible that his tale and propriety can be maintained together.

In Ulrich von Lichtenstein love had been the serious business of life. In Neidhart von Reuenthal love is vulgarized, commonplace. In Tannhäuser love is a jest. The shafts struck home. At the beginning of the fourteenth century chivalrous love poetry was dead and buried in Germany. For this century witnesses a shifting in the political life of the German nation that did not fail to have an immediate effect on its literature. In the progress of society and the State, knights and knighthood had become less important to the nation, less able, and perhaps less disposed to be the patrons of literature. And on the other hand the free cities were growing in wealth and power, and so began to aspire to literary distinction, which till then had seemed the prerogative of the courts. This shifting of the literary centre is marked by a new name, "Meistersänger," Mastersingers, familiar as the title of a noted opera. Nuremberg was the chief centre of this artificial literary life, which aimed to apply to poetry the commercial and eco-

nomic spirit that had given the free cities their political recognition. The natural result was a stagnant lake of mediocrity, prolific only in the lowest forms of life. One might be disposed to make an exception for Hans Sachs, whose genuine poetic genius was cramped by his traditions and surroundings to such an extent that few of those to whom the name is familiar know a line of his countless verses. Those of his contemporaries are buried deep, lapped in the lead of their own dulness.

The old order was giving place to the new in these generations. Life was less ornate, less beautiful, less cultured, but it was more serious and more realistic. The fourteenth century saw the establishment of the first German universities,[1] and it should be remembered that the influence of these institutions was not favorable to idealism or the culture of the imagination. The classics were studied more from a literal than from the æsthetic side, and hence they were slower to purify taste here than elsewhere in Europe. In literature naturalism was stretched almost to the verge of shamelessness, and the result is tersely stated by Scherer to be that "this whole period, into the seventeenth century, produced no poetic work of art that could satisfy even elementary demands in purity of form."

The drama had now become the most important field of literary activity. Vast numbers of carnival plays and farces were written, many of them witty and

[1] Prague, 1348; Vienna, 1365; Heidelberg, 1387; Erfurt, 1392. These exist to-day. Cologne, founded 1388, is abandoned.

all of them vulgar. Progress, such as it was, came mainly from abroad, especially from Italy and France, both by adaptation and direct translation. Somewhat later they began to draw on the classical Latin comedy also.

In other forms of poetry this epoch produced very little. A few songs have survived, and in epic verse there is the social and political satire "Reineke Fuchs," which busied High and Low German poets till Goethe gave it its final form. Didactic poetry naturally fills a larger place as we approach the Reformation, but in this class Brandt's "Ship of Fools" is the only work that would interest to-day, unless perhaps it were the "Weisskunig" of the emperor Maximilian I., who was also the author of "Theuerdank," a book somewhat in the style of Wolfram, and the compiler of a collection of old German legends, the "Heldenbuch."

But it is evident that prose is the natural vehicle of literary expression in a realistic age, and it is to prose that the Germans turned more and more during this period. The older poems were now laboriously turned into this form to suit the altered taste, and the heroic tales that had this fate are precisely the epics that held their place longest in the popular memory. Foreign fiction was now habitually translated into prose, and the fifteenth century saw in "Eulenspiegel" and his unsavory tricks the first independent attempt at German fiction. Meantime legal books had appeared in German, while sermons, treatises on medicine, and summaries of popular

science were soon to abound, as was to be expected when we consider that seven additional universities had been founded during the fifteenth century.

These universities became almost immediately the stronghold of the "Humanists," a body of men who sought a literary and social reform through a revival, first, of classical study, then of study generally; and as it happened, they were drawn to concentrate their attention on philology as applied to Biblical text and translation. Thus, though themselves Catholics, they prepared for the Reformation. The typical "Humanist" is Erasmus, "a witty philologue, who knew how to prize elegant worldly life, and sought by much writing to further the spread of his own neat, graceful, and rather formal Latin style, but who found his highest task in applying philological methods to holy Scripture." [1] Though he never broke with the established church, he was the pioneer of the higher criticism, and would have sympathized with the most advanced investigators of to-day. His criticism of the text of the Latin Vulgate could not be answered, and served to shake the already undermined foundations of the traditional faith. His reformed text was made the basis of Luther's epoch-making version. The work of Erasmus, Reuchlin, and their fellows in weakening the influence of the clergy before the Reformation had been openly proclaimed is not always realized. Much should be ascribed to them that is commonly attributed to Luther.

For in general it grows clear that the Reformation

[1] Scherer, l. c. 272.

was not the work of one man nor of one generation. The spirit of Walther and Wolfram is as essentially Protestant as the spirit of Luther and Melanchthon, and at no time in the interval had witnesses been wanting to the popular protest against the corruptions of the mediæval hierarchy. Yet it was more against the Church as a political power and in its economic aspects than against its doctrinal teachings that the revolt was directed, and in the popular consciousness the new theology was accepted as the condition and excuse of the social and political change that they felt to be imperative. From the political and economic standpoint a reformation was a necessity, and probably this Reformation, with all its errors and bitter injustice, was the best practicable one. The point is important to our literary purpose. Since we have to do with a political rather than with a moral convulsion, we shall see its prelude in the gradual decay of culture and taste, till both come near extinction; and we shall look, during its progress, for a great increase of writing and printing, accompanied with an almost total cessation of pure literature.

But in the midst of this literary stagnation the Reformation produced a work of crucial importance from a philological standpoint, — Luther's translation of the Bible. Not as though the Scriptures had not been translated and printed in German before his day. There had been eighteen earlier printed editions, and translations in manuscript had circulated freely from early times. But from a literary point of view all these had been lame efforts. Luther gave

in his Bible a literary model to Germany comparable only to our own Authorized Version. Begun about Christmas, 1521, the New Testament was printed before the close of 1522, the whole Bible in 1534, and a revision in 1541, and this has remained essentially the German Bible until our own day. Men may differ in their moral judgment of the German Reformation; none can close their eyes to the vast gain to literature and culture that sprang from this book, the foundation of the new German language. For from that time the various dialects were recognized as definitely relegated to a subordinate place. Germany had once more a universal literary medium, not artificial now, but caught from the lips of the people. The Reformation was in the air. It was the work of all Germany. The translation of the Bible is Luther's peculiar and immortal honor.

For, while Germany was divided confessionally by the Reformation, it was united as it had never been in the vehicle of its literary expression. Bavaria and Brandenburg, the Lower Rhine and Austria found a common bond in this new community of intellectual communication. The change was accepted with such eagerness that we hear of books printed in 1515 that required modernized editions in 1540. All the grammarians of the century took Luther's Bible as the standard, so that before 1600 it had established an undisputed sway from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Danube and the Alps.

Luther's pamphlets and hymns contributed also to fix the German language, and the latter, especially

the translations from the Latin, have at times considerable literary merit, though they lack a delicate sense of form. His university at Wittemberg was also zealous to spread his language with his teaching in every part of Germany, and these joint influences survived his death and the incompetence of his immediate successors.

Still, though Luther had given Germany a literary language, it was yet two centuries from a revival of literature, for the Reformation proved quite as unsympathetic to culture as ever the old Church had been. What people wrote and printed at this time is in the main forgotten save by special students, to whom, if they find any nourishment in it, it is only charity to leave it undisputed. For what little progress might be chronicled in the century that separated the Diet at Worms from the Thirty Years' War was effectually stifled by that awful nemesis.[1] Germany, that had cast the firebrand of religious strife in the midst of Europe, was first to suffer and last to recover from the burning. That war left Germany with barely a third of her former population, less than a third of her former wealth. It was necessary laboriously to reacquire ideals and standards in æsthetics and literature. The beginnings of this preliminary labor were made by the literary societies, especially in Hamburg and Leipzig, and almost exclusively by university men, and their efforts were

[1] This is the century of the original Faust-play, of the satirist Fischart (1550–1590), of Sachs (1514-1569), and of the poet-reformer, Opitz (1597–1639).

greatly assisted by the religious toleration that the Thirty Years' War had forced on the exhausted combatants as a political necessity. Intellectual freedom was a reality in Germany, or at least in Prussia, earlier than elsewhere in Europe. Such liberty as was known at the court of the great Frederic was not to be found by the Seine nor even by the Thames.

The fruit of this freedom of thought was sure, but it was slow to ripen. Few names rise above mediocrity in the century that followed the Peace of Westphalia. The most noteworthy in view of what was to follow is Paul Gerhardt (d. 1676) perhaps the most popular writer of religious verse in Germany. His most striking characteristic is a subjective sentimentality, often lapsing into weakness, that makes him far inferior to the robust Luther. But yet it seems to have been this very quality that inaugurated the subjectivity in German lyric poetry which in its final development gave the songs of Goethe and Heine their pre-eminent place in European literature.

That Gerhardt's sentimentality reflected the taste of the time appears from the contemporaneous idyls and pastorals with their attempted euphuism, on which there followed swiftly the natural reaction, the pseudo-naturalistic tale of blood and murder, possibly begotten under the star of the Spanish *novela picaresca.*

Grimmelshausen's "Simplicissimus," the only story of the century that is worthy to survive, may mark for us the beginning of modern German fiction. This

wonderfully realistic tale of the Thirty Years' War, in which the author himself bore a part, struck so popular a chord that it evoked a crowd of imitators, who outbade one another in tales of wild and warlike adventure. Spanish influence can be traced also in the feeble efforts at satiric fiction modelled on Cervantes and Quevedo; and by the side of these there soon appears a third current, the tales of travel and shipwreck, with their source in the English "Robinson Crusoe," showing usually a strong but untrained imagination and very little artistic finish. Here rivalry led naturally to a riotous excess which furnishes the excuse and the point of the satires of Münchausen and Schelmuffsky, the comic liars of German literature. The imitations of "Robinson Crusoe" are hardly to be counted. There is a whole literature of *Robinsonaden*, the Italian Robinson, the Dutch, French, Saxon, Silesian, and Swiss Family Robinson; then there is the "Insel Felsenburg," perhaps the best in this kind, a tale of an earthly paradise, with its Adam and Eve and the kingdom they founded; all quite in the style, and at the last clearly under the influence, of Rousseau's theories of nature and society. Meantime the drama had sunk to hopeless vulgarity; so while poetry verged in Gerhardt on the extreme of sentimentality, prose had gone to the extreme of naturalism.

These two tendencies, each opposed to the other, and both opposed to good art, were first effectively checked by the influence of the French classical poets, through their great champion Gottsched. But when

once French sobriety had served its purpose its extreme advocates, Gottsched and his school, became rather a hindrance than a help to the more original men of the younger generation who chafed at foreign leading-strings and found a powerful though indirect support in their great king. For Frederic of Prussia both in war and peace was a thorough patriot. He did more than all other men together to rouse the national pride to self-conscious independence, and so it was fitting, when a new era was to dawn with unexampled glory for German literature, that of the three men who should usher it in, Winkelmann and Klopstock should be Prussians by birth, and Lessing by his training. And here on the threshold of Frederic's reign (1740–1786), it is fitting to close this brief sketch of the origins of Modern German Literature. For the first-fruits are already blossoming, and Frederic lived to see the sure promise of the literary glories in which he had an essential though a silent part.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST-FRUITS: KLOPSTOCK, WIELAND, HERDER.

When Frederic II. ascended the throne of Prussia, Lessing was a boy of eleven, Wieland of seven years. Klopstock was a youth of sixteen, Gellert a young man of twenty-five. Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and Jean Paul Richter were not yet born.[1] The literary interest of the day lay in a controversy between Gottsched and the Leipzig school on one side and Bodmer, Breitinger, and the Zurich school on the other, as to whether the French or English poets were the more worthy of imitation, since it was clearly necessary to imitate somebody. When Frederic died (1786) this controversy and the men who waged it were buried in oblivion with all their works. Lessing had already completed his epoch-making career (d. 1781), Klopstock had long passed the zenith of his powers, Herder had done his most important literary work, Goethe was just closing the first period of his unchallenged mastery, and Schiller was already approving himself a worthy compeer of that great Olympian.

[1] The dates are, Herder, 1744; Goethe, 1749; Schiller, 1759; Richter, 1763.

This half-century represents a progress in literature and æsthetic taste that is hardly paralleled in history. One may almost call it an intellectual revolution. And in this age of marvels it is not the least among them that such a popular change should be in very large measure due to a king who troubled himself directly very little about the German language and hardly at all about German literature. He spoke and wrote French habitually, and talked German, so he told Gottsched, "like a coachman," while he saw little to admire in the zeal of those who were even then recovering the "Nibelungenlied" from long oblivion. It seemed as though that prince of realists would show the world that the true patron of literature is not the monarch who scatters among authors his bounties and favors with royal munificence, but rather the king of men who can rouse his people to a broad and confident conception of their mission, and fill them with national enthusiasm, sure that that spirit, once aroused, will not fail to find a genuine literary expression. No nation has ever failed to say what it had to say. Let there be a noble thought to express, and the poet will not be wanting. The hour will bring the man.

That enthusiasm, that noble thought, Frederic gave to Germany by his heroic struggle against the combined powers of Austria, France, and Russia, in the Seven Years' War. By it Prussia became the rallying point of German national feeling, such a centre of force as had not existed since the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Aspirations became possible that till

then could have been only fanciful chimeras. The overflowing current of patriotism burst out in Gleim's ringing "Songs of a Prussian Grenadier," and men were indeed "proud to be Prussians," as they still sing to-day in camp and schoolroom. Even the wider name of "German" was vindicated from a reproach that had clung to it since the Reformation.

How could this new political life fail to reflect itself in literature? It has never yet failed in the world's history. The classical period of the literature of Greece was the age that followed Marathon and Salamis, and the nation who had been leaders there were leaders here also. The age of Cæsar and Augustus had swelled the Roman heart with a pride that we can but faintly realize, and literature answered to its triumph with the "Æneid" and the "Carmen Sæculare." The world-embracing ambition of Louis XIV. fired the imagination of the French and found its echo in the pulpit and on the stage. And in England, when God breathed and the Armada was scattered, when another world spread a boundless horizon of unfurrowed seas before the stanch ships and stancher hearts of her mariners, when "girt with many a baron bold," the Virgin Queen vindicated English liberty, and yet again, when the Iron Duke checked the conqueror of Europe in the Peninsula to overthrow him at Waterloo, those glories had their literary expression in Shakspere and in Byron, each in a worthy company. So, as we have seen, it was in Germany in the days of Barbarossa and Frederic II., the Hohenstaufen emperors; and so now a crown of

literary honor was to be added to the laurels of the Prussian king.

On the other hand, mere military glory does not further literature. The age of Napoleon, his personal ambition of conquest and universal empire, remains unfruitful. The last war with France, nursed by Bismarck, desired by Moltke with all his puritan zeal and puritan limitations, brought indeed far greater material returns at far smaller cost than Frederic paid for Silesia; but it brought no such literary blossoming. It is not military success, but active, unrestrained, political life, or a glorious and successful struggle for national existence and reformation that nurses the literary spirit; and therefore the age of Frederic is greater than that of Louis, because thought is more free.

This new national literary spirit would naturally manifest itself first in opposition to the French school with its headquarters at Leipzig, and Gottsched for its general. Gellert raises the national standard at home, while the Zurich school shake the allegiance of the provinces. Gellert was in no way a great poet, but he was on the right track and endeavored to oppose a distinctively German spirit to Gottsched's cosmopolitanism. So, when Frederic summoned them both to his court, though his French sympathies prepossessed him in favor of the elder writer, he found Gellert "more intelligible," because he was more in touch with what was essentially national. Though himself a man with no critical training, the king saw immediately that "Gellert was quite another

man than Gottsched," and he did not scruple to change the title of certain complimentary French verses that he had in the first instance addressed to the latter, dedicating them in his printed works "Au Sieur Gellert," a change which naturally provoked much comment, though it accorded very well with the popular voice.

It is interesting to notice this general recognition of Gellert's superiority to Gottsched, and this the more because he was only a mediocre poet. In him it was less the intrinsic excellence of the work that was enjoyed than the spirit in which it was written; for their ready appreciation showed that the literary public of Germany was in advance of its authors, that the hour was waiting for the man. When that man of genius should come he would find an audience ready to hear and able to understand his message. It was their hope that Gellert was that genius that gave him for a time such unbounded influence that, as one contemporary critic said, "With our public, to believe in Gellert, and in religion and virtue, is nearly the same thing." But now that he can be judged in his true perspective it is clear that, though Gellert was often good, he was never great. His principle contributions to literature are fables in the style of Gay or Lafontaine. He wrote poor dramas and some good hymns also, moderating the sentimentality of Gerhardt. A worthy school of literary aspirants gathered around him, men who were ambitious to make of Leipzig a "Little Paris" with what Goethe called their "rouged-doll ideals,"

for Gellert had no technique to teach. He was only the first to touch a popular note that others could touch as well as he. So the Leipzig school soon passed its zenith, and the scene shifts to Zurich, and a little later to Berlin.

It has been the peculiar service of the Swiss to German literature to give to it, as models for study and imitation, the great English poets, Shakspere and Milton, whose literary positions contrasted so sharply with the prevailing French taste that ruled absolute in Germany when Bodmer threw down the gauntlet by his translation of "Paradise Lost," in 1732; for it is significant of the Swiss literary character that they were first attracted to the Puritan, and through him to the greater Elizabethan. Bodmer certainly went to strange extremes in his blind admiration of the blind poet, but in the controversy that followed, especially by his treatise on "The Marvellous in Poetry," he with his fellow-professor, Breitinger, did yeoman service in emancipating taste from the fetters of French classicism. He was to Germany, between 1732 and 1740, much what Chateaubriand was to France more than a half-century later.

The first fruit of this English cultus was only a substitution of an English for a French model. It was still imitation that they sought. Indeed, the greatest service that Milton did for them was to lead them to Shakspere, to the free study of human life, emancipated from all conventions of an outgrown and spurious classicism. But the study of Milton

was the direct inspiration of at least one work which, though hardly ever read, and certainly not readable, is so often mentioned that it deserves some notice here, — Klopstock's "Messias."

Klopstock was nine years younger than Gellert, and had been associated with him and his school in Leipzig, from 1746 to 1748, while still a student. He had gone then as a private tutor to Langensalza, but in 1750 had been invited to Zurich by Bodmer, who saw in the early cantos of "Der Messias," published in 1748, a diligent use of his translations of Milton. He remained in Zurich till 1751, when he went to Copenhagen on the invitation of King Frederic V. Here he lived till 1770, and completed the greater part of the "Messias." Political changes in Denmark brought him back to Germany, and he died in Hamburg in 1803.

Klopstock is perhaps the only poet who has lived to old age under favorable literary conditions and yet never equalled his earliest work. The first three cantos of the "Messias," published at twenty-four, mark the highest point of his genius. The seventeen cantos that followed, stretching their slow length to 1773, his odes, mainly pietistic, his very artificial "Art of Poetry," as well as the antiquarian patriotism and obsolete mythology of his "Bardiete" and dramas, all show the best and purest intentions coupled with a certain unripeness and overwrought sentimentality that make his work almost as foreign to our modern thought as the "Heliand" or Otfrid; far more so than "Paradise Lost." The "Messias"

is intended to be an epic of the life of Christ, but the epic movement is lost in pietistic contemplation. The writer feels too much himself to arouse strong feeling in others, and since the scala of these feelings is limited both by the nature of the case and by the character of the man, his work suffers from repetition far more than a vigorous objective narration would have done. "Klopstock should have endeavored to realize the conditions of ancient Palestine, and so he should have studied books of travel; he should have studied his own environment, to find naïve traits by which to characterize the populace of that time; and he should have studied the clergy and fanatics of his own acquaintance to find models for the Scribes and Pharisees. But he did not think of that. He painted quite without studies, — without studies from life, without studies from books; everything was taken merely from his heart. Earnest feeling was poured in soft and graceful form around his characters. Loftiness and dignity were predicated of their speech, bearing, walk, and mien."[1] Yet the persons of his epic lacked individual activity, and an anxious respect for the sacredness of his protagonist marred the promise of his strongest situations. So while Klopstock marked an intellectual advance, he wholly failed in his effort to revive the German religious epic, because, while subjectivity and sentimentalism had by no means had their day, their application to religion was not in accord with the spirit of the age of Frederic, and grew less and less so as that age ad-

[1] Scherer, l. c. 419–421, freely translated.

vanced and the influence of Voltaire and the French Encyclopædists grew.

Klopstock wrote also a number of odes, some without rhyme, dealing now with religion, now with love, and always with sentiment. He also "improved" a number of Luther's hymns according to his more refined taste, the new versions contrasting with the old somewhat as Tate and Brady with King David.[1] But if his services to thought and to poetry were small, his contributions, both direct and indirect, to philology and prosody were not insignificant. His rhymeless odes had led him to a more careful study of quantity than had yet been made in German, and this work was an essential preliminary to the "Luise" of Voss, to "Hermann und Dorothea," and still more to the "Achilleis" of Goethe, and to the "Gazellen" of Platen, where indeed quantity in German is pushed beyond its reasonable limitations. He did much also to enrich the poetic vocabulary. These merits, while they brought him no nearer to the public, made him a writer of much value to the poets who immediately followed him.

Klopstock's patriotism was as genuine as his religion, but it, too, suffered from his indefinite idealism. He had before him in the events of the day the highest inspiration; but it seems as though proximity

[1] He wanted to change Luther's superb "Mitten wir im Leben sind Mit dem Tod umfangen" to "Wir der Erde Pilger sind: Mit dem Tod umfangen." Still more Klopstockian is the mawkish "Müde, sündenvolle Seele, Mach dich auf, erlöste Seele," for the picturesque "Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele, Lass die dunkle Sündenhöhle." Both passages are cited by Scherer, l. c.

and experience, indispensable to the realist, were a hindrance to Klopstock. It is as if, to give a conception literary treatment, he must think it far away in some misty pre-historic time, where his fancy could not be checked by the knowledge of his readers. This seems to have been Goethe's feeling, who in talking to Eckermann[1] recalled "that ode where he lets the German muse run a race with the British. When one thinks what a picture that makes when the two maidens run together and throw their legs, and raise the dust with their feet, one must see that the good Klopstock did not have before his eyes a living image and sensible perception of what he did, else he could never have made such a blunder." So, too, in the "Messias," Goethe thought that Klopstock showed no talent or disposition for grasping the sensible world and for drawing characters, "and so lacked what is most essential for an epic and dramatic poet, one might almost say for any poet at all" As for Klopstock's drama, "Hermann," the subject lay too far off, no one knew what to make of it, and so the representation remained without effect or popularity."[2] He seemed wilfully to sacrifice his best opportunities. Thus when once he had anticipated Gleim in a superb "War-song," addressed to Frederic and his men, he must needs twist it later that it might apply to the Emperor Henry the Fowler in the tenth century, though even this is too modern; and by instinct he prefers the period of Tacitus' "Germania," from which he takes his subjects for odes and dramas on

[1] Gespräche, Nov. 9th, 1824. [2] Ib., Feb. 16, 1826.

"Hermann and Thusnelda," "Hermann's Fight," "Hermann and the Princess," and "Hermann's Death." Here, too, the example was to prove of more value than its intrinsic worth; Klopstock pointed the way to Kleist for his "Hermannsschlacht," and to the novelists of the German migration, Freytag and Dahn.

But if we regard all this work in itself and apart from its ultimate consequences we shall not be surprised that Frederic and the literary circle he gathered about him found little sympathy with the men of Zurich or with Klopstock. To them the "Messias" offered little and promised even less, for the whole tendency of Frederic's influence, both directly and indirectly, was to turn aside the current of German thought from sentimental enthusiasm and pietistic mysticism, to realistic study and practical activity, by which alone the nation could rest secure in its well-earned liberty, and in the wider scope he had won for its expansive energies. The change that Frederic wrought in the German mind will appear very clearly in the literary career of Wieland.

This amiable and very talented man had first launched what Dante calls the "little skiff of his genius" in the milk-and-water current of pietistic sentiment that had its source in the University of Zurich. In his literary life, which extended for more than half a century, it is interesting to trace the gradual revolutionizing of the theories and purposes of the orthodox Swiss in the hands of the free-thinking Prussians.

Cristoph Martin Wieland was the son of a Swábian pastor, born in 1733, and trained in his home in the straitest sect of German orthodoxy. When he was fourteen they sent him to a school at Klosterbergen, where the principal exercises appear to have been confession, the telling of spiritual experiences, and mystic contemplation after the manner of the German pietists of that day. The religious enthusiasm thus carefully nursed was coupled with surreptitious reading of French sceptical philosophy. It is difficult to tell which of the two influences was the less calculated to produce a strong or practical character. Their combination made him the sport of sentiment and feeling, while it removed the restraint of traditional authority. One of the first results was that the embryo saint at seventeen fell head over ears in love with a pretty cousin, whom he glorified in glowing prose and numberless verses, and though these verses were, as might have been expected, of no great intrinsic value, they are interesting because they give unmistakable proof of the young man's talent, and are a still more striking witness to his remarkable facility of production.

The style of this first poetry was already a marvel of ease and fluency. His vivid fancy left the cold unreality of Klopstock far behind. And in the next year he went to Zurich, which Klopstock had left so short a time before that the new-comer might have seemed to Bodmer to take the place of the elder poet. His manuscripts had preceded him, and secured him a warm welcome from the heads of that prudent

school who were always on the alert to train worthy successors.

In this intimate association with Bodmer, Wieland's attention was at first occupied with plans for Biblical epics, still dear to the heart of the translator of Milton. The pietistic influence outweighed for the present the philosophical tendency. It was in this spirit that he entered on a literary controversy with Gleim and a group of like-minded minor poets who had called their school Anacreontic, a name that may serve to indicate its ethical, though not its formal character.

This controversy with these partial classicists was of crucial importance to Wieland's literary future. He fell under the spell of the Greek culture he opposed, his pietism melted gradually beneath the bright sun of Epicurean rationalism, and he discovered in his own heart how narrow a verge separates Platonic affection from Anacreontic love. Disturbed, delighted, the pastor's son hastened to clothe this personal experience in literary form, and in his poetical studies of the "psychology of modern love" he broke irretrievably with the cherished ideals of the Puritans of Zurich. Bodmer could not but see that Wieland was much more of a genius, but much less of a Milton, than his former protégé, Klopstock.

And so, in 1759, Wieland betook himself to the more genial atmosphere of Berne. He was now completely emancipated from the spirit in which he had written "The Temptation of Abraham," the "Sympathies," and "Sentiments of a Christian," a spirit in

which he could declare that the most doggerel hymn was better than the most charming Anacreontic ode. As was natural in a young man with his school training and pietistic Swiss associations, he went quickly to the other extreme. He was soon involved in several discreditable love adventures, but he obtained an official appointment at Biberach in 1760, where his intimate association with Count Stadion and the emancipated but charming Sophie von Laroche, whose daughter and granddaughter were to play a part in Goethe's life, fostered the tendencies that led his naturally light heart further and further away from a prudent worldliness to the verge of thoughtless hedonism. Out of this he grew in due time, married a decidedly home-spun, bread-and-butter wife, settled down to the daily round of a model husband, and became the father of fourteen children.

Meantime these light-hearted days had left their literary mark. The Greek delight in the pleasures of sense is painted in "Nadine" with admirable skill. In "Don Silvio von Rosalva" (1764), he has imitated "Don Quixote," for the sake of satirizing all forms of idealism in order to preach the realism of Shaftesbury and Voltaire. The same facile convictions characterize the verses of this period, and at length in his "Comic Tales" he touches the border line of frivolity, if indeed he does not pass beyond the limits of the decorous.

But into this new style Wieland carried all the graces of language that had distinguished his former work, and these new books were read by his former

opponents. He had become the favorite author of the German nobility, while those who had once been his associates and sympathizers were burning the books of their Ichabod, by way of celebrating Klopstock's birthday at Göttingen. Now, whatever its effect on morals, this change in the circle of his readers was a peculiar good fortune for German style, for thus, since both schools of literature was attracted either to his former or to his later manner, his influence became more general than that of any other writer of the time. So Goethe, speaking in 1825, could say to Eckermann: "All High Germany owes its style to Wieland. It has learned many things from him, and not least of them the ability to express itself with propriety." And elsewhere (March 6th, 1830) he says that, however Wieland might imitate French forms and methods of description, "he remained always fundamentally German."

While Wieland was still under the spell of worldly pleasures he took an important step toward a truer realism. His former admiration for Milton led him to a careful study of Milton's great predecessor, Shakspere, the deepest of the students of real life. But this study not only influenced all Wieland's subsequent work, it was to exercise also a direct effect on all the writers of his time. Before 1767 he had published translations, partial or complete, of twenty-two of the Shaksperian dramas, most of which were up to that time but little read in Germany. Meantime, beside his work on Shakspere, he was learning much from the English novelists of his own genera-

tion. Fielding became in a sense his model in realistic fiction, though the German is the more consistently philosophical of the two. Thus Wieland assimilated both from Greece and from England, but yet he preserved always his German individuality.

The best of Wieland's novels from the later part of this period of his development are less read than they deserve to be. "Agathon" (1767), "Musarion" (1768), and "Die Abderiten" (1774), should not have quite lost interest to-day. They are all Greek in their scenes and titles, but the veil is thin and the German purpose unmistakable. That purpose is always good-humored satire, tolerant, and rather epicurean. "Agathon" is essentially autobiographical. The titular hero is introduced to us as a platonic enthusiast, an idealist, to whom is opposed Hippias, a materialistic sensualist. Neither can convert the other, but Agathon yields himself a willing captive to the charms of Danaë, who may be supposed to represent French deism as opposed alike to pietism and to atheism. "Musarion," the tale of the conversion of a misanthrope to the joy of life, a sort of "philosophy of the graces," as Wieland called it, was slighter in character. Here the didactic purpose is directed ostensibly against Pythagoreans and Stoics, who stand once more for materialism and idealism while Musarion represents the eclectic "via media."

Between "Musarion" and "Die Abderiten" Wieland exercised his versatile pen in other fields. The Christian drama of his youth had been a failure. He

now found a more congenial task in light opera. But what proved most immediately profitable to him was the proclamation of his political views in "Der Goldene Spiegel," for this earned him a professor's chair at the University of Erfurt, in 1769; and three years later he was able to exchange that post for a higher honor at the court of Weimar, whither he was summoned to superintend the instruction of that young prince Karl August, who was destined to repay his teaching by a more enduring reward than is the lot of most princely tutors; for his pupil was to occupy a bright eminence through all the coming period as, above all others, the German Mecænas, the patron of letters, and the active promoter of all the intellectual activities of his time. At his court Wieland held an honorable and respected position for more than forty years, until his death, in 1813.

This added dignity was naturally reflected in greater literary seriousness. "Die Abderiten," the best of his satires, contrasts the narrow provincialism, almost universal in Germany, with the cosmopolitan political ideas that were beginning to make their way in France. This purpose is masked behind a story of the efforts of the travelled philosopher, Democritos, to bring to his broader views the citizens of his native Abdera. Some of the episodes in this novel, for instance the "Donkey's Shadow" and the "Frogs of Latona," are far more widely known than the story of which they form an essential part. In all of these novels poems are freely interspersed, as was the custom in the older pastoral romances, though

Wieland has introduced them with far more grace and tact. This pastoral manner seems to have struck his fancy, for in the later "Amadis and Idris" he followed it still more, perhaps too, closely.

From the time of his removal to Weimar, Wieland devoted himself wholly to literature, and his literary quarterly, "Der Deutsche Merkur," became the means of spreading and confirming his influence throughout Germany. This influence had now become in the main a tendency to serene optimism, to purer taste, and the more general diffusion of a popular culture. But while Wieland sympathized with every manifestation of genius he did not sympathize in the enthusiastic excesses of younger men whom he had helped to rouse to the energy that characterizes this period of "storm and stress" (1770–1780). So far, however, as these men had in them any enduring qualities, mutually helpful relations were soon established between them and him. The results of their attempted revolution of German taste, and more especially their fond study of the middle ages, Wieland made wholly his own. And they, as young blood grew cooler, learned to understand and respect the now venerable master.

It might be a small thing to Wieland that the Klopstockians of Göttingen should burn him in effigy, or that the Swiss charlatan, Lavater, should call on all good Christians to pray for his conversion; but he must have felt more keenly the mockery of Goethe, who, in his brief period of intellectual unripeness, in his farce, "Götter, Helden, und Wieland," had made

his classical mythology the subject of unsparing satire. Yet Wieland's outward equanimity was unruffled, and he enjoyed the keenness of Goethe's wit even when it was directed against himself. In the "Deutsche Merkur" he recommended Goethe's farce to his readers as an excellent bit of fun. War with such an antagonist was impossible to the magnanimous Goethe. Indeed, he was among the first, at least among the generation of "storm and stress," to see the true worth of Wieland, and though the latter criticised Goethe's drama, "Götz," as "a beautiful monstrosity," the young poet had to confess that "no one understood him better than Wieland."

So when Goethe came to Weimar, in 1775, they soon got to be good friends. In the next year Goethe became a regular contributor to the "Deutsche Merkur." Soon after, Herder joined them, and that journal then became the organ of the Weimar school in general, and so attained a paramount influence in Germany, in which Wieland came to have only a secondary part. Of the intercourse between these men Goethe says: "My personal relations to Wieland were always very good, especially at first, when I had him to myself. It was at my suggestion that he wrote his short stories. But when Herder came to Weimar Wieland grew unfaithful to me; Herder drew him away from me, for the personal attraction of this man was very great." Again he says: "Wieland was always good-humored, and, though he depended on no one's opinion, he was clever enough to adapt himself to anything. He was like a reed which

the wind of opinions blows this way and that, while it remains always firm on its little root."

The result of daily intercourse with these friends was to give new wings to Wieland's mobile genius. They showed him both by precept and example the rich mine that lay unworked in mediæval Germany. They led him to Hans Sachs and, better still, to the court epic of the thirteenth century. No modern poet has caught so nearly the spirit of this unique epoch. No German verse recalls so vividly as "Geron der Adeliche" the best work of Hartmann von Aue.

More original in form than "Geron," and indeed holding a place quite apart in German literature, is "Oberon," which is at once Wieland's best work, and at the same time the last product of his prime. This poem, in tripping, easy, eight-line stanzas, appeared in 1780. The subject was taken partly from a French romance, just as the older court epics had been, partly from Chaucer, and partly from Shakspere's "Midsummer Night's Dream." The diction is limpid, the style brilliant. It can be read without effort, and yet it has a sustained interest, depending not alone on incident, but on a true development of character.

Huon is a peer of Charlemagne's court. He has killed a son of the emperor, and is condemned by him to an adventure that seems to assure his death, but he executes it with Oberon's aid, and wins in its course the love of Rezia, daughter of the Caliph of Bagdad. A broken vow, on his return to France, causes the loving pair many troubles and adventures,

but their faithfulness is crowned at last, and is celebrated in fairy-land by the reconciliation of Oberon and Titania.

"Oberon" was immediately hailed on all sides as a masterpiece. Goethe writes to Lavater under the enthusiasm of a first impression: "So long as poetry is poetry, gold gold, and crystal crystal, 'Oberon' will be loved and honored as a masterpiece of poetic art." Years afterward, in 1830, he judged more soberly: "The foundation was weak," he told Eckermann, "the plan had not been carefully elaborated before execution. . . . But the graceful, clever, and witty style of the great poet makes the book so agreeable to the reader that he thinks no more of the true foundation, but overlooks it as he reads." Even so stern a critic as Lessing was roused to unwonted expressions of admiration. And the verdict of 1780 has been but little modified in the century that has followed. "Oberon" is still reprinted, year by year, in countless editions, from the most gorgeous to the cheapest, and indeed is perhaps more widely read to-day than any other German epic, save Goethe's "Hermann und Dorothea."

Wieland's later work showed nothing comparable to "Oberon," nor yet to the "Abderiten." For nearly a decade he printed nothing of importance. Nor can great value be attributed to the romance with which he broke silence at length, for "Peregrinus Proteus" was much inferior in verve to the earlier efforts in the same style. Here the cynical hero relates the story of his voluntary suicide from religious enthusiasm, to

the sceptical Lucian, whom he meets in the land of the shades. Nor can "Aristipp," a romance in letters from the age of Pericles, claim a high place, whether for its imagination or its antiquarian research, though it contains an interesting characterization of Socrates.

But in connection with these classical romances he was now brought to do work of less original but more permanent value to German culture. As in early life he had introduced Shakspere to the general German public, so now in his later years he did a service of quite peculiar worth in his translations of the Satires and Epistles of Horace, of the Letters of Cicero, and of the complete Dialogues of Lucian, a character so naturally sympathetic to him that, as we have seen, he introduced him into one of his later novels. He translated also portions of Xenophon, of Aristophanes, and Euripides.

Beyond this work it may be said that during the last twenty-five years of his life he did little but watch, with an old man's benignant smile, the glorious flowering of German literature whose first budding he had himself tended. During the years 1794–1802 he edited a complete edition of his works in forty-five volumes, very small after the use of the period, and up to 1809 he still had an active part in literary and critical journalism. He died the calm death of an Epicurean, in 1813.

Wieland had been a student at Zurich when Lessing, Germany's greatest literary reformer, began (1753) the remarkable career that is presently to

occupy our attention. Wieland was already widely read when Herder opened his fruitful series of critical studies. He had watched with sympathetic interest the whole ascending course of Schiller's genius, which untimely death had veiled from earthly eyes before it reached its zenith; he had seen almost every phase of the philosophy of life reflected in the wide embrace of Goethe's giant mind; he had been chosen to train the youth of the wisest and most munificent patron of German literature; and he had the rare fortune to see with his own eyes the ripe fruit of the seed he had planted, while the ideas for whose acceptance he had fought in his critical journals had become the common inheritance of literary Germany. He had earned a right to a serene old age, with the honor, love, obedience, and troops of friends that should accompany it. The Czar made him a member of the Order of St. Anne; Napoleon, of the Legion of Honor.

To us Wieland's geniality will be his chief claim to our interested attention. Goethe was more versatile, and vastly greater, Schiller was more philosophical, Herder more serious, Lessing more critically profound, Heine more exquisitely fanciful. But perhaps none of them is a more delightful or recreative companion of our lighter moods than Christoph Martin Wieland.

Though Wieland's long life stretches more than thirty years beyond Lessing's (d. 1781), he belongs to an earlier literary period, and had but a small share in the results of the work of that great reformer. It is therefore fitting that he should precede him

here. With Herder the case is somewhat different, and it is rather the exigencies of literary proportion than any essential fitness that assigns him his place here, in order that nothing may distract attention on the path that is to lead us, through Lessing, to the heights of Schiller and Goethe and the Land of Promise beyond.

Herder, born in 1744, was fifteen years the junior of Lessing, and five years older than Goethe, with whom he was more directly associated. Yet his essential affiliation was more with Lessing, so that parallels between them belong to the fascinating commonplaces of literary history; they touch at so many points, and still they are radically contrasted in the bases of their natures. There is hardly a work of Herder that does not show the moulding influence of the elder critic, while yet there is not one among them that Lessing could, or would, have written. And on the other hand it is clear enough that while Herder admired, he never fathomed Lessing's spirit, for while there all shone in the clear white light of truth, Herder wrapped himself rather in the veils of mysticism. The one thought, the other felt, and so Herder is more eloquent, but Lessing is more convincing. Take a page from one of Lessing's essays and the whole suffers, for you have deprived it of an essential member. On the other hand, no writer lends himself more gracefully to citation, none is more persistently fragmentary up to the very close of his life than Herder. And so, too, in their judgment of society, Herder has the pastor's benevolent ap-

preciation of all that he conceives to be good, while Lessing seems rather to quiver with bitter indignation at falsity and sham, with that *sæva indignatio* of the English Swift, that led him, as Heine said, "to strike off many a skull in pure wantonness, and then mischievously to hold it up to the public to show that it was empty."

It has been said that Herder holds the same relation to Lessing that Schiller does to Goethe, and there is much to justify a comparison which is yet inadequate, as we shall see. Less happy is De Quincey's suggestion that Herder is the German Coleridge. He was something other than that; he was far less poetically creative, less original, yet he was more learned, with wider literary horizons, more industrious, less inaccurate; but still he had the same indefiniteness and the same fulness which led them both to plan vastly more than they could possibly execute, so that the value of both to literature rests less in accomplishment than in suggestiveness.

Herder was the son of a teacher in a girls' school in the little town of Mohringen. His mother was the daughter of an armorer, and the family were in narrow circumstances. The young Herder distinguished himself at school, but it was less this than his frail health that saved him from industrial life and caused him to be apprenticed as copyist to Deacon Trescho, a voluminous but forgotten author. This laborious office did much to develop an easy style, and the free access to a generously furnished library was of great value to him, though he seems

to have been neither well treated nor justly appreciated by his master.

Already he was making a few ventures in independent composition, when he awakened the interest of a Prussian surgeon, and gladly availed himself of his suggestion to leave his task-master for Königsberg, where he hoped to have an operation performed on a weak eye and then to study medicine. But this latter design suffered sudden shipwreck. His nerves proved too weak, and he fainted at his only visit to the dissecting-room.

Then he took a friend's advice and turned to theology. "Ignorant, simple, unknown as I was, without my parents' permission, and against the will of him to whom I had been intrusted, without money, and with prospects for only three weeks, I entered the academy." He obtained a small scholarship, however, and eked out a subsistence by teaching in a school where his pedagogic ability attracted warm commendation.

Of vital importance to him was a close intimacy formed at this time with Kant, the famous metaphysician, a Königsberg professor, who became, with Rousseau, the guide of Herder's philosophical speculations. The young candidate for orders was now beginning to gain distinction as a preacher, especially of graceful funeral sermons; and so, after two years at Königsberg, a wider field was opened to his talents in the cathedral school at Riga, where for five years he was decidedly a popular favorite (1764–1769) with the church-going public.

That he did not stay longer in this congenial circle was due to his relations with that Klotz, whom Lessing's critical scorn was soon to drive to his grave. In 1767 Herder had entered the critical arena in earnest with certain "Literary Fragments" which he himself called "supplements" to Lessing's "Literary Letters." Now Herder was distinctly, by nature and by profession, a man of peace, and he had announced his entrance into the fierce controversy with complimentary allusions to the autocrat of Halle, of whose character Lessing's life will reveal somewhat more. Klotz, as was his wont, returned him pound for pound, and smile for smile, in his "Acta Literaria," and then he waited for Herder to acknowledge the compliment with a second censer of adulation. But Herder presently tired of this pseudo-critical see-saw, and, what was worse, he had committed the unpardonable sin in Klotz's eyes of praising the arch-adversary, Lessing. And so he was presently treated to a dish of very piquant personalities, quite in the style of modern journalism. At this poor Herder was frightened into a weak protest that he had not written certain articles in the series "Kritische Wälder," which had begun to appear in 1769, and which the universal opinion, supported by conclusive circumstantial evidence, held to be from his pen. Thus Lessing saw himself abandoned, while Klotz pushed such an olive-branch aside with the contempt that it deserved.

Herder was not made of stern stuff, and he resolved to recruit both his health and his reputation

by a journey to the south of France. Doubtless he intended to return to Riga, where indeed he would still have been welcome; but fate ordered it otherwise, and on his return to Germany, in November, 1769, he accepted the post of tutor to the Prince of Holstein-Eutin.

It was on the occasion of this return that he met Lessing and his friends at Hamburg, and passed a social fortnight with them. The critic, thus aroused, soon got the better of the pedagogue in his mind. His work with the prince did not suit him, and in fact he had neither the power nor the moral courage to resist the demoralizing influences that surrounded his charge, to whom it was probably intended, less than Herder should teach virtue, than that he should teach him to assume it. The course of their associated travels had brought them to Darmstadt. Here Herder met his future wife, Caroline Flachsland, and this new element in his life made him the more disposed to seek some permanent settlement.

This excellent lady was quite after Herder's heart and in her account of their love, as well as in her letters, we may find valuable materials for eighteenth-century psychology. "In Klopstock and Kleist our souls found one another," she wrote, years afterward. Her letters are classical models of sentimental exaggeration, as we might expect if they were inspired from such a source. They seem made up in great part of the various possible combinations of the words "soul," "bliss," "indescribable," "holy," "melancholy," "angel," "God," — all very gushing, a little

mawkish, and offering a very striking contrast to Eva König's nearly contemporary letters to Lessing.

Full of this love, Herder gladly accepted a call to the pastorate of Bückeburg, but first he was obliged to undergo a tedious treatment of his eyes for several months in Strasburg. Yet this period of enforced rest proved beyond all expectation fruitful, for here he became intimate with Goethe, then a student at Strasburg, and in the influence that he exercised on the development of that supreme genius he earned his best claim to grateful memory. Goethe says that he found Herder at this time "irritable and impatient," which the circumstances might explain and excuse, but yet it may not be unjust to recall the fact in view of their later relations. Throughout his life Herder shows rather a delicate moral nature than a strong character, though it is on the possession of the latter that he constantly dwells in his letters to his enthusiastic *fiancée*.

Herder did not go to Bückeburg till 1771, and his delay caused him to be received rather coldly by the prince, a thorough man of the world, who cared more for social tact than for pulpit eloquence. He found little sympathy for his tender soul in court or people, and turned all the more eagerly to Caroline; for, like many great preachers, he needed adulation to call out his best powers. He was not yet able to marry, however, and seems to have found composition difficult during the suspense of his betrothal. Since Riga days he had written only a few critical notices, and a longer essay on the "Origin of Language" that had gained

a prize at the Berlin Academy, but he was gathering material for his "Philosophy of History," and for "The Oldest Document of the Human Race," and had already begun the studies in popular poetry that afterward made his chief title to literary fame.

At length, in 1773, he was married, and set up his household "with a few debts," as his wife tells us in her memoirs. This new relation naturally assisted his literary productivity, and the "Oldest Document of the Human Race" was now put on paper so rapidly that the first part could appear at Easter, 1774, to be followed by the second two years later. This work is an æsthetic treatment of the record of creation, and of Oriental imagery in general. Its somewhat nebulous theology involved him in bitter discussions, which he had not the controversial strength to sustain; still, his work found a general recognition in literary circles, which would have made his position secure at Bückeburg, but yet he welcomed with relief the call that came to him in 1776, through the mediation of Goethe, to the position of "General-superintendent" at Weimar, which had already become through Wieland and Goethe, the centre of a new literary school in Germany.

At Bückeburg he had corresponded with many of the literary lights of the time, he had seen Gleim often, and had offered Goethe condescending advice and literary counsel. Now he was in daily intercourse with Goethe, till that poet grew beyond him, with Wieland, always genial, and, as time went on, with most of the other men who, after Lessing, won

distinction in German literature. There was no place so favorable to literary activity as Weimar, none where Herder could have done so much for others, none where he could have found an environment so favorable to his delicately organized genius.

The new "General-superintendent" was received with mixed feelings. The orthodox and the pietists intrigued against him, but his eloquence made its way; he was hindered in his reforms in Church and State, but he was in good measure repaid by the pleasures of social life at a court where Goethe led the company, and all the diverse talents were inspired with equal ardor.

And now Herder's great work begins in earnest. In 1778 he published philosophical and æsthetic essays and a goodly part of his Popular Songs, "Stimmen der Völker." These he continued in 1779 and 1780, together with theological and political studies. Distinctions and decorations now began to come to him both from Berlin and Munich. In 1782 he published a noteworthy study on "The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," to be followed by still more theological and philosophical essays.

This period of his greatest activity was interrupted by a journey to Italy, in 1788. The classic ground charmed and fascinated him. His letters from Naples and Rome are full of enthusiasm; but Italy had no such deep influence on him as on Goethe, because he was not so deep a man, and more narrowly German in his dread of classical clearness.

The fourteen years of his life, after his return from

Italy were much occupied with routine work in various offices of the ducal church and schools. His publications, still numerous, were now mainly theological or philological, and largely fragmentary. The natural sciences occupied him also. But the only work of these years that claims a literary interest today is his translation of the Spanish romance of the Cid (1800), one of the last works of his facile pen. He died in 1803.

Of Herder as a philosopher and as a philologist it is for others to speak. As a literary man he was more remarkable for the seed that he sowed than for the harvest that he reaped. His work was useful, but it lost its chief value when once it had been used. So he extended and corrected the æsthetics of Lessing, showing that the latter's canons required limitation, that his definitions excluded much of the best lyric verse from true poetry, that we should distinguish, not with Lessing's "Laokoon" between action and rest, but between "Das werdende," that which is developing, becoming, and "Das gewordene," that which has attained a resting-point in its development. But his æsthetics were soon superseded in their turn by Schiller. So, too, he laid the foundations of the scientific history of culture and of the philosophy of history, but the structure soon hid the foundation, and his work in these fields has hardly more than an historical, one might almost say an antiquarian, interest. This is true also of his work in comparative philology, and perhaps even of that in the comparative study of literatures, while its illustra-

tions in the "Stimmen der Völker" have a permanent worth.

So from a purely literary standpoint Herder must be ranked rather as a genial than as a great man. Clear in general conceptions, he was often hazy in details, and hence he will naturally be strongest as an interpreter of others. In "Stimmen der Völker" he found exactly the field for his talent. Here he has gathered the popular songs of all nations, from Greenland to India. He has translated them with a skill and a sympathy that preserves in a wonderful degree the local color and feeling. The same delicate taste appears also in the application of his theory of popular poetry to the poetical books of the Bible, while the "Cid" is more important as a reflection of French and Spanish literature than for its original work. Both in lyric and in drama he had little creative power, but he had remarkable poetic sympathy. So it was Herder's peculiar mission "to establish the connection of poetry with the intellectual life."

But the limitations of his calling trammelled his development. He had great appreciation and love for the German language, and at the same time he had a deeper conception of the relation of language to human nature and to national character than any other man of his day. This gave its value, in its time unique, to the "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry" and to the "Stimmen der Volker;" for these were truly "characteristic poems from all nations, flowers of their spiritual life, pictures of their peculiar nature. . . . There were voices from Peru and Greenland, from Lapland and

Esthonia. There might be heard the Letts and Lithuanians, Wends and Serbs; Greece, Italy, Spain, and France gave of their treasures, nor was Ossian wanting. The old Norse poetry, the mystic notes of the Edda, dreadful prophecies and bold heroic cries were heard anew. Danes, Scots, Englishmen, swelled the chorus. The German 'voices' began with the 'Ludwigslied' and closed with the songs of Herder's own day. Ballads, romances, songs of love, of war, and of the dance, shepherd-songs, fables, lyrics of all kinds, were represented. But the different nationalities were not divided. All humanity had equal rights; all nations stood on one plane before the critic, who marshalled their various "voices" only according to æsthetic principles, to related motives, and similarity of tone. With wonderful skill Herder was able to catch the distinctive note of each, to carry it through without wavering to the close, and to render the most entirely diverse moods, metres, and styles, in complete little works of art. And what a choice he offered! This nosegay had been bound by a gardener, for whom all the nine muses had plucked the flowers. Never was a like effect attained by such means. Never has any one better understood manifold literary appropriation."[1] This is why Herder has sometimes been called "the great appropriator," for the quality that gives his poetry its chief value is seen also in his scientific work. He was not a thorough thinker. He saw vast horizons, but he saw them dimly. He was more a seer than

[1] Freely translated from Scherer, l. c. 477.

a scholar. But he was a seer in many fields, and by suggesting their relations to one another he did more than he knew for modern science.

Scherer has said that Herder's influence on Goethe "shows how much a clear-sighted critic of historic and theoretic culture is able to give to a clear-sighted poet who is eager to be taught." But this statement seems to call for some limitation. We shall see that the time of Herder's influence on Goethe is precisely the time when that great man is least distinguished for clearness of vision or independent precision of thought. It was the time of his restless youth. Passionate as are Goethe's professions of discipleship, great as was his admiration for Herder's eloquence, their natures held them asunder. Neither wholly comprehended the other. Herder's soul was like a star and dwelt apart; but like the star, its brightness had always in it something of the night. Goethe loved the day, and never left the firm foothold of this earth. And yet, at a critical moment of his life, the broad-minded preacher was an essential factor in educating the brilliant and worldly youth to be one of the most complete men in whom nature has ever mirrored her perfect beauty. To have had such an influence on such a man will be Herder's best title to thankful memory.

CHAPTER III.

LESSING THE REFORMER.

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING was born in 1729. He was thus four years the senior of Wieland, and like him, son of a country parson; but he saw life from a sterner side than that charming epicurean, and while he was less fortunate, as the world counts fortune, he left a deeper impress on the artistic and literary life of Germany than Wieland, or indeed than any of his predecessors. The divergence between them began in their boyhood. Wieland grew up in an atmosphere of pietistic sentimentality; the Lutheranism of the Lessing household was calm, matter-of-fact, sober. And in his development there is nothing of the vacillation of Wieland's career, nor of Herder's incompleteness. It was a gradual outgrowing of the old bonds, every step forward and none back.

The family of the Lessings had been distinguished in the civil and religious life of the Lausitz since the Reformation. But his father was in narrow circumstances, narrowed still more by a growing family of twelve children, among whom Gotthold was the second. He was a precocious boy, and already in his fifth year had asked that he might be painted with a great

pile of books rather than with a bird-cage, as the painter had designed. It is said that his greatest childish pleasure was to turn the leaves of folios, "learning in play to use the tools of knowledge." He studied drawing, too, in these early years, and did not escape a touch of pedantry, as may be seen in some of his school letters from St. Afra's, at Meissen, whither he had gone at thirteen.

His teachers reported Lessing as "a horse that needed double fodder." All was easy to him, and a royal decree permitted him to enter the university while his course was yet unfinished, for his masters declared "they could use him no longer." He brought to Leipzig a very thorough knowledge of Latin, which was the foundation of his literary life; but it does not appear that he showed as yet any remarkable precocity as a writer, and seventeen, his age at matriculation (1746), was about the average of the time, as it was also the age of Goethe's entrance at the same university.

The freedom of student life stimulated his independent productivity. In 1748 he produced on the Leipzig stage a play which was indulgently received, and he had already printed a small volume of rather Anacreontic verse. It is plain, however, that he felt himself out of sympathy with the smug platitudes of the Leipzig school, and the inspiration-and-water of Klopstock. "I realized that books might make me learned, but would never make me a man," he wrote at this time; so he "sought society in order to learn life. I left my study and ventured out among my

fellows. What a contrast I discovered. Boorish bashfulness, ungainly clownishness, utter ignorance of social customs, were the qualities that distinguished me."

He resolved to make himself able to profit by the society that he now first learned to appreciate. He took lessons in dancing, fencing, riding, and went constantly to the theatres, translating French plays for the comedians in order to get free tickets to their performances, and thus obtaining an invaluable familiarity with the technique of the stage, such as no reading could ever have given him. It was this work that led to his original venture, "The Young Scholar" (1748); but the applause that greeted it found no echo in the pastor's home, who "deplored the vile society of comedians and free-thinkers," into which he assumed his son had fallen. The father was mollified for a time by a sermon which Lessing composed, to show, as he said, "that he could become a preacher any day." However, it is significant that he now abandoned theology and entered his name as a student of medicine.

But already he felt that literature was his field, and the iconoclast spirit stirred within him. He saw that reform meant struggle. He wished no toleration in the bloodless combats of æsthetics. Yet he was never extreme in his contentions, never aiming at more than seemed attainable or immediately useful to his purpose. But a life of conflict is necessarily a restless one, and temperament as well as fortune made his doubly so.

Against the wishes of his father, and still more against those of his creditors, he left Leipzig and his fresh theatrical success, for Wittenberg (1748), and then for Berlin, which was, as it has remained, the centre of German free-thinking and worldly scepticism. Here he made his way by his pen, independently, though at first in dire poverty, lacking even decent clothing, and at last honorably but narrowly, writing literary criticisms of remarkable keenness, doing hack translation for publishers who paid for genius by the inch, and venturing occasionally on original dramas and lyrics, which can claim no great value.

Meantime the spiritual atmosphere of Berlin had begun to eat away the armor of his Lutheran training. Already, in 1750, he met the great French sceptic, Voltaire, then a guest at Frederic's court, and sat, it is said, for some time as a daily guest at his table. Now, Voltaire was generally regarded, and perhaps with justice, as the greatest stylist of his time, and the eagerly receptive Lessing must have profited enormously from this proximity, in which he learned at length to dissect Voltaire with his own solvents and scalpels. But Voltaire was more than this. He was the declared enemy of the received form of Christianity, and to the Lausitz parson Lessing's loss seemed greater than his gain.

Voltaire soon quarrelled with his disciple, as indeed he did with nearly every acquaintance in his long literary career. Here the ostensible cause was a suspicion that Lessing had betrayed his literary confi-

dence by showing a manuscript of the "Siècle de Louis XIV.," which had been intrusted to him for his private perusal. The merits of the case are not clear, and the trifling episode would certainly have been forgotten had it not been for the antagonists that Lessing afterward provoked. By them the insinuation was often revived during his life, and always with some effect.

The general result of these Berlin years was good, however. Independent he was sure to be from his nature; but Berlin gave his life a wider horizon, and his own influence on Berlin even in these early days, was noteworthy. He was the first to secure to Germany, says his biographer, Danzel, "due estimation for the vocation of the man of letters. Before him scholars wrote only for scholars. Lessing was the first, who, though only twenty, felt the impulse to break through these barriers and address what he had to say directly to the body of the nation." Berlin had been more under the influence of Zurich than any other German centre. Lessing helped to emancipate it, and gathered around him a group of earnest young men, chief among whom were Moses Mendelssohn, a Jewish banker, and the bookseller Nicolai. By means of this following he obtained a strong position in literary circles, so that, as early as 1755, there was a demand for a collected edition of his works. They contained nothing, however, that is now generally read or prized, save some songs of love and good-fellowship that still hold their place in student circles. Not as though the "Fables" and

"Epigrams" and the dramas of these volumes were not superior to any work of their time; but Lessing himself, by his own later superiority in these fields, has condemned his immaturity to oblivion. He was twenty-six when this honor of a collected edition came to him. Wieland was then twenty-two, and had done nothing of significance. Goethe was a boy of six, and Schiller was yet to be.

In this year Lessing returned to Leipzig, apparently because of the greater theatrical advantages there; for Berlin was far behind most German capitals, and was to have no permanent theatre till 1771. Soon after he undertook a journey to England, but the outbreak of the Seven Years' War called him back to share in the patriotic enthusiasm which for a time softened the asperities of literary controversy. In Leipzig, as in Berlin, Lessing became almost immediately the centre of a reforming circle, and so preserved here also his literary prestige and influence, which was of double importance at a time when the deeds of Frederic were giving a more popular turn to lyric poetry than might have been otherwise attainable. For that Lessing was among the very first to see the golden opportunity, is clear from his preface to Gleim's "Songs of a Prussian Grenadier," one of the most popular books of the entire century.

That Gleim had roused the masses to an interest in literature, set Lessing immediately to consider whether other forms of imaginative expression that had once been genuinely popular could not be made

available for the ends of the new national movement. It was thus that he came to interest himself in the legend of Dr. Faustus, which was afterward to be treated in so masterly a manner by Goethe. But the Seven Years' War was to attract him to more present themes, and it drew him also to other fields for his support.

Berlin was the natural centre of the patriotic spirit, and to Berlin, accordingly, Lessing returned in the spring of 1758. Early in the next year he began the publication of the "Literary Letters," which were epoch-making in their plain, upright, and downright style, that called spades spades with refreshing frankness. He made special havoc among dilletante translators and the admirers of Gottsched's French tendencies, nor could the pietists of the school of Klopstock win aught but contempt for their odes, which, as he said, "were so full of feeling that the reader felt nothing." "Is it not blasphemous to supplicate God so for a woman?" is his comment on Klopstock's love poetry.

It is difficult to estimate to-day the importance of these "Literary Letters" on Germany. They cleared the air of false sentiment like a thunder shower. His deliberate aim was to foster the creation of a national literature, and this he furthered by fearless criticism in all literary fields. With these letters, under the star of Frederic and amid the glories of the Seven Years' War, modern German literature begins, as the older classical period had done, on distinctively national lines. This is the first German work that is generally

read to-day. His critical severity set the lesser men in a truer light, while all who could comprehend profited by his teaching. It is with no exaggeration that Lessing has been called "the father of modern German criticism."

The "Letters" appeared periodically, after the manner of "The Spectator," and were continued till 1765, with some irregularity, however, for in 1760 Lessing had left Berlin for the seat of war to become the secretary of General Tauenzien at Breslau. He had been moved to accept the post partly for its own attractions, but more, as it seems, by social estrangements, for he writes of it that "he wishes to spin himself into a cocoon for a time, to reappear again a bright butterfly."

Amid the stirring scenes of the Silesian headquarters, Lessing gathered material for the greatest work of æsthetic criticism and for the greatest comedy that Germany had yet seen, — for "Laokoon" and for "Minna von Barnhelm." Already, however, in "Miss Sara Sampson" he had produced a play that, in what it involved, was even more epoch-making for the German stage, for it brought into it a realistic psychology and the drama of common life. As Lessing's biographer, Stahr, has said, "It was the egg of Columbus for German dramatic art. By introducing prose, and by basing this first great success of the German drama on the strongest feeling in German national life, the family relation, he directed the actor to the realistic expression of emotion." And of this same play Goethe says that in bringing forward

the worth of the middle and lower social classes it heralded the French Revolution and the democratic era. But yet, whatever be the importance of "Miss Sara Sampson" in its relation to the art of its time, it is so vastly inferior to Lessing's later work, and so prejudiced by its foreign setting, that it is seldom read or acted to-day.

"Minna von Barnhelm," on the other hand, was a truly national drama, its hero a Prussian soldier, like those of whom Gleim had sung, and the scene was Berlin, the time the present day. All traditional prejudices were sacrificed to realism. The very names of the characters were homely German, though the new dramatic school were then affecting English appellations, as their predecessors had adopted the classical names of the French stage. And not in name alone, but to the core of their natures they were individualized Germans, and Germans of 1767, drawn from the heart and the experience of the author, all genuine, worthy, national characters. "This incomparable work, where honor twines the garland of love," [1] was a tribute to German womanhood, a glorification of the Prussian army, a homage to the great king.

So "Minna" is essentially naturalistic, and as much so in language as in conception. It is perfectly true that in declaring his independence of French models he realized a suggestion of Diderot, who had pointed to the possible dramatic elements in common

[1] Stahr, Leben Lessings. The whole paragraph is, however, more largely indebted to Scherer, l. c. 448.

life; but while Diderot was essentially pathetic, Lessing appealed rather to the sterling homely virtues of the German heart, and so was more genuinely natural. But more than this, it was, as Goethe said, "the first product of the German mind that had local, contemporary interest, and so it wielded an immense influence." "In the obscure times in which it first appeared, it seemed a brilliant meteor,"[1] and served Goethe as a model for his youthful dramatic essays. These realistic studies, the mean truckling host, the honest coarse Just, the amiable enthusiastic Werner, the lively mercurial Franciska, have kept their distinct literary individuality to this day.

In its political aspect "Minna" was an olive-branch stretched out from victorious Prussia to the Saxons, smarting under defeat and full of jealous and suspicious hatred. And it had the marvellous fortune to please both sides, to be received with enthusiasm at Berlin and at Leipzig. It is melancholy to reflect, however, that honor was all the return that the needy author of the best of German comedies received for his labors.

Thus the German stage was nationalized, and opened to modern realism. And immediately the fiction of the period reflects this in its increasing naturalism, though here the gain was more than lost in the romantic reaction of the next generation. But in every field of literature the effect of "Minna" could not but be sound and health-giving. And

[1] Eckermann, Gespräche, March 27, 1831. On Feb. 27, 1827, he had expressed himself more critically.

what "Minna" taught by example, the "Laokoon" was to teach by precept.

The basis of this æsthetic study is a critical attempt to define the limits of poetry and painting. It had been suggested by a passage in which the great antiquarian Winkelmann had contrasted the statue of Laokoon with Virgil's description of his death, and had concluded thence the inferiority of poetry to plastic art. It was characteristic of Lessing that he should choose as his adversary the man whom he, with all Germany, regarded as a master, for he felt he had a right to measure himself with the greatest; but it is curious to note that he began the composition of his study in French, — so poor an outlook had his native tongue a generation before the period of its greatest glory.

To Lessing it seemed fundamentally false to regard the divergence of poets and painters as errors on either side. He would investigate the characteristic differences of both, to see if from them laws peculiar to each might not be deduced which would often compel them to take quite different paths. He found that poetry could imitate objects only by suggestion; hence descriptive verse, such as that of Thomson's "Seasons," seemed to him radically wrong. Poetry deals with action, plastic art with situations, and hence the range of poetry is wider, and in it invention has a grander scope. Sculpture must suggest motion by bodily forms; poetry must suggest bodily forms by their actions, and it follows from this that while sculpture should be confined to the beautiful,

poetry in its revelations of the whole moral world, may include the ugly and the terrible, as incarnations of the evil that forms an inevitable part of it.

This is in brief the thesis of the "Laokoon." Only a third of it was completed; but, torso as it is, it revolutionized literary taste, and what before had been denied became "the A B C of criticism." "One must be young," says Goethe, "to conceive what an influence 'Laokoon' had on us, taking us from the realm of dreary contemplation to the free fields of thought. That long misunderstood phrase, *ut pictura poesis*, was immediately set aside. The distinction of the speaking and plastic arts was clear. All the results of this glorious thought were revealed to us as by a lightning flash." Herder, too, and Wieland were cordial in their admiration, and quick to learn from the new light.

The publication of "Laokoon" had been hastened by the hope that Lessing might win by it the post of Royal Librarian at Berlin; but this office was bestowed on a grotesquely incompetent Frenchman, for Frederic's mind had been poisoned against Lessing by the slanders of Voltaire. Throughout his life, hitherto, fortune had never smiled brightly on him, but he felt this stroke bitterly. He had resigned his position at Breslau. Berlin had become hateful to him, "waiting," as he bitterly said, "in the market-place, while no one would hire him," — him the greatest critic and the greatest dramatist Germany had yet known, a man who must have felt that he would have been of all Germans the most after

Frederic's royal heart, and whom Frederic was never to know. To this fatality we owe it that the "Laokoon" was never finished. It was left to Schiller and to Kant to endeavor to complete a work of which Lessing had said to Nicolai that not even Herder dreamed what he was really aiming at. But though the critical artist and the artistic critic might under better auspices have done more for German literature, what he had done for the rising generation was already inestimable.

While he was "standing in the market-place" Lessing received a call to Hamburg from the directors of a new theatre there, whose public-spirited citizens proposed to establish a national stage that should lead and form the dramatic taste of Germany. These men sought Lessing's co-operation as their dramaturgic critic and adviser. This post was peculiarly congenial to him, but he was first obliged to sell his library, which he had accumulated with much loving care, to pay his debts and rent. From the first he he had been devoted to the stage, and even now declined a better paying post in Cassel that he might labor for its elevation. For, as Devrient, the historian of the German theatre, has said, Lessing "made nothing so completely his life's mission as the untiring endeavor to revive the national drama." In April, 1767, he left Berlin. He was now thirty-eight years old.

The theatrical enterprise speedily collapsed; but Lessing's connection with it has given it an enduring name. Beginning in May, he published twice a week

those letters on theatrical criticism that go under the name of the "Hamburg Dramaturgy." These were continued, though with some irregularity, till 1769, and came more and more to be essays on dramatic art, showing little, and at last no connection with their original cause. Lessing regarded the drama as the highest form of art, uniting, as it seemed to him, the advantages of the plastic arts and of poetry. In this sense the "Dramaturgy" may be regarded as a continuation of the "Laokoon." He bases his critical canons on Aristotle, whom he so explains that Sophocles and Shakspere can become his models, while he draws from the French tragedians, Corneille, Racine, and especially Voltaire, his examples of the distortion of the Aristotelian rules.

The "Dramaturgy" from that day to this has been the *vade mecum* of the German stage. "For the depth of its knowledge, the healthiness of its wit, its energy of character and purity of taste," it was, as Gervinus has said, "the inward joy and just pride of every German." These letters gave the death-blow to the French school in Germany, though indeed the dramatists that followed, in the period of "storm and stress," went rapidly to the other extreme, rebelling against all rule, as Lessing himself had predicted that they would do. But when the swaying needle came to rest in the classical period of Schiller and Goethe, it pointed to his standard, and Lessing has ever since asserted an undisputed authority.

At first he had addressed himself to the fundamental principles of acting, exalting the art far be-

yond the place then claimed for it. The actor, he said, must "think everywhere with the poet, or, where he is at fault, he must think for him." He is to have in him something of the sculptor, the painter, and the poet, and Lessing even begins to elaborate for him a "philosophy of gesticulation." But actors are proverbially sensitive to criticism, and he was soon constrained to turn his pen to more general discussions.

The German dramatists of his time were essentially imitators. He brushed these aside to direct his attack on the source of the evil, on Corneille, on Racine, and on Voltaire, whose personal character he had, as we know, good reason to despise. They had pretended to be followers of Aristotle. He showed that they followed only their own misconceptions. The result of his work was that æsthetic canons that had ruled Europe with an iron rod since more than a century were banished forever to the limbo of the past, while all eyes were turned to Shakspere, and some few to Calderon, who now for the first time became known in Germany.

But Lessing uttered no wholesale condemnation. He recognized the poetic worth of Corneille, he gave Molière a place beside Shakspere as a master of comedy, a place grudged him by his own countrymen, Voltaire and Rousseau. Indeed, the whole tone of the "Dramaturgy" is essentially conservative. Lessing was, says Schiller in a letter to Goethe, written in 1799, "the clearest as well as the most liberal thinker on art, and the one who kept most constantly

before him its necessary conditions. As one reads him one might almost believe that the golden age of German taste is already past, for how few recent judgments concerning art deserve a place beside his."

The National Theatre at Hamburg had yielded to philistinism and the Hamburg clergy, but Lessing would have continued the "Dramaturgy" had not pirated editions taken away all hope of remuneration for a work that "marked one of the most cheering periods in the evolution of the German drama." "The reprint," he said, "is the only cause why the publication has been delayed and is now suspended." But as his "Dramaturgy" was drawing to its enforced close, Lessing's attention was attracted to antiquarian studies by the persistent and ill-natured attacks of Klotz, a professor at Halle, who by dint of assurance had imposed his shallow pretensions to critical knowledge on the literary world, where for a time he seemed to attain a certain distinction. Lessing had criticised some of his Latin trifles, and the offended professor had begun a relentless war on him in the journal, which he maintained as a sort of literary bludgeon; for Klotz did not hesitate at misrepresentation or personal slander of all who would not recognize his supremacy.

We have seen how he frightened Herder into flight. Lessing was made of different stuff. He took up again the sword of the "Literary Letters," that had lost none of its keenness, and "openly declared war on Klotz." This latter at first had almost all the public

on his side; for, as Lessing said, "he had scolded many and coaxed more" to submit to his dictation. But Lessing's blows were as crushing in their weight as they were marvellous in their rapidity and terrible in their withering contempt. "I should be sorry," he says, "to have this investigation of mine estimated by its origin. For what called it forth is so contemptible that only my manner of using it is my excuse for using it at all." Yet once in the field he acted on the principle that mercy must follow victory. He had promised to bring Klotz completely to the ground. In twenty-eight days he completed twenty-four of these "Antiquarian Letters," and before the end of the second month his pamphlets formed a volume. The work was thorough. Klotz stood convicted before all men, not only of ignorance and superficiality, but of dishonesty and malice. All literary Germany breathed freer to be rid of the incubus that they had allowed to impose itself on them.

Professor Reiske, in an unguarded moment, congratulated Lessing on having done what he would have done himself if he had not shrunk from soiling his hands with such ignoble blood. To him the critic replied with fine irony: "I waited long to see if some one would not go forth to meet the Goliath of the learned Philistines. At last I could endure his stupid derision no longer, without hurling a few stones at him from my wallet." Presently he changes the simile to one from his favorite Don Quixote: "I am only a mill, not a giant. . . . Midges may swarm be-

tween and about my sails, but wanton boys must not seek to run through. . . . Whoever is hurled into the air by my arms has only himself to blame, and I cannot let him down more gently than he falls." And in the same spirit he says again: "If I were to trust myself to turn critic my scale would be: Mild and flattering to the beginner, doubtful and yet admiring to the master, terrible and strict to the bungler, derisive to the braggart, and as bitter as I was able to the partisan." His contempt for Klotz is equalled only by his indignation for those who had "permitted him to carp and criticise unhissed." For he was left to carry on the battle single-handed, "fighting a nest of hornets," as Herder said. And so the honor of emancipating German literature from its false standards is his alone. But here, as always, he was more fitted to crush than to convert. As Goethe said, "he was the highest intellect, and only the highest could learn from him. He was dangerous to half intelligence."[1]

In the main, these fifty-seven letters can now have only a minor interest; but toward the close of the controversy there appeared a pamphlet, "How the Ancients represented Death," which has a higher importance for the history of æsthetics, since it banished the skeleton and hour-glass from German art. In their place appeared the genius with the inverted torch; for, as Lessing rightly said, "Only a misapprehended religion can separate us from the beautiful. That religion will be true and rightly

[1] Eckermann, Gespräche, Jan. 18, 1825.

apprehended that brings us back to the true and beautiful everywhere."

The controversy killed Klotz's reputation and possibly hastened his end, for he died in 1772. Of this, Lessing's friend, Eva König, wrote to him: "I was glad to think that you may have contributed greatly to his salvation, since you probably brought him to comprehend himself." Klotz's biographer, Von Murr, says deprecatingly, "He threw a pea at Lessing and was answered by an avalanche of stones." The critic's resources were by no means exhausted, however, and his posthumous papers showed as damaging criticism of Klotz as anything that he printed in his lifetime.

Meantime, however, Lessing had left Hamburg, famous but poor, for neither "Minna" nor the "Dramaturgy" had brought him money, thanks to legalized piracy. He would have gone to Italy; but he found that the sale of all that he possessed would not furnish the smallest sum that seemed necessary. He was still cherishing this scheme when there came to him from Brunswick an offer of the position of Court Librarian at Wolfenbüttel. He accepted this post with the more eagerness since love had at length crossed his path, and this made it seem quite necessary for him to found a home even at some sacrifice of literary environment.

Lessing is perhaps the only one of the great writers of this time who first felt the strong passion of love in middle life. He seems to have had few or no sophomoric attachments, and this belated passion, so deep,

so strong, and so tragic, was in all ways worthy of his noble soul. Eva König, widow of a silk manufacturer of Hamburg, was Lessing's chosen love when he accepted the call to Wolfenbüttel, and they were formally, though secretly, betrothed soon after he began his work there. But she had tangled business complications to unravel, and the interests of her children to consider, so that their marriage was deferred for five years from their betrothal (1771–1776). This period of trial and separation produced the most remarkable series of letters of love that Germany has to show. There is a dignity, a self-restraint, an all-pervading purity of thought, that exalts the relation on both sides, while both man and woman preserve the noblest traits of their sex.

But we who know the tragic end of the long struggle cannot read the story of these strong hearts without melancholy. That he might be ready for his wife when she could come to him, Lessing buried himself for these five years far from the influences that would have favored his genius, and for this he endured the humiliations of patronage from a petty and faithless prince. It is touching to see how he clings to the nest he has built for her, even though Eva, with the magnanimous courage of Tellheim in his own comedy, bade him order his life with no thought for her. Neither was young, and under the strain of these years both grew old in body, though still fresh at heart.

A gleam of sunshine pierces the clouds when, in 1775, Lessing breaks away from Wolfenbüttel to visit

his beloved, whom business ties held in Vienna. But even here the irony of fate pursues him. He is still dependent; old Hamburg creditors and the insatiable demands of his relatives have forced him to overdraw his salary ever since he first took service with the Duke of Brunswick. He is no longer the free "sparrow on the house-top" of which he loved to speak, no longer the free man, and when, after ten happy days with his betrothed, the duke's son requests him to follow him to Italy, just as he is arranging for the marriage that now first seems possible, the beautiful vision fades, and he must go, though he leave his heart behind. Small comfort to him that he had been fêted and applauded at Vienna, in theatre and at court, as no German author had ever been. He was an appurtenance of Wulfenbüttel. Small comfort to him, bitter irony rather, that the Italy he had so often longed to see should be granted to him, at last, at the one moment of his life when it was an unwelcome boon.

And now while his bride is waiting for him, as he had waited so long for her, he must wander aimlessly over the land he would have studied, must see his fruitless stay prolonged for weeks and months, must suffer agony from lost letters, till his puzzled mind is shaken, and all the while he must smile on courtiers and pay his court to princes. He found himself indeed not without honor in this old home of the arts. His fame had preceded him; some of his works had been translated into Italian, and at Rome the friends of the great Winkelmann were his also. Yet he could not but be restless in this Promised

Land, and none rejoiced more than he at the peremptory order that recalled the prince to Brunswick, whither Lessing returned on the 23d of February, 1776. Soon after he was married to "the only woman with whom he would trust himself to live," as he said; and now at last he might hope to end his storm-tossed life in humble happiness. How graciously fate smiled on him will appear presently. We must first consider the literary harvest of these thirsty years.

Great things could hardly come from a mind in suspense and from Wolfenbüttel; and so, save for "Emilia Galotti," which had been projected and partly completed long before, this period offers little that is comparable with the "Literary" or the "Antiquarian Letters," still less with "Laokoon" or with "Minna." He knew this as well as any one. In letters of the time he says: "I believe the most wretched man is he who must labor with his head, even when he is not sure that he has a head." "God knows it has never been more necessary for me to write for money than now. I cannot busy myself now with anything that requires mental effort or elasticity. I must bore where the board is thinnest. When I am less tortured from without I will take the thick end in hand again." "I have here," he says, "only such books as sooner or later kill the intellect as well as time. If one stops thinking long, at last one cannot think." What were these books that were killing Lessing's mental elasticity in the library at Wolfenbüttel?

On assuming his post, Lessing had said that he "would not have the name of librarian for nothing." His "Contributions to Literature and History from the Ducal Library at Wolfenbüttel" were to prove that a critical scholar could make even these dead bones live. Already in other libraries he had shown a wonderful tact in tracing clews to rare and curious books. The very first day of his official life as librarian revealed to him a long lost work of mediæval theology, the defence of Berengar of Tours from an accusation of heresy on the Eucharist, which had been made by Lanfranc the famous Archbishop of Canterbury. It is not necessary to enter here into the views of this noted Protestant of the eleventh century. The document was, however, of great intrinsic interest, though it was most attractive to Lessing because it cleared a sympathetic character from the accusation of paltering with truth, an act that above all others was hateful to him. It was in this connection that Lessing uttered the memorable words: "The man who is faithless to truth in threatening danger may yet love her much, and truth will forgive his infidelity because he loves her. But whoever thinks to prostitute truth under masks and rouge, he may be her pimp, he has never been her lover."

The defence of Berengar, though annoying to the Roman Catholics, was agreeable to the Lutherans. But his next discovery antagonized these also. He detailed the pitiful fate of Neuser, a Lutheran clergyman, whom foes of his own theological household had exiled to the broader hospitality of Mohammedan

Constantinople. Other fruits of his librarian's activity may be passed over, but these have a double interest as the prelude to the great controversy with Lutheran orthodoxy that was to cloud, and yet irradiate, the closing years of his life, the years of the "Anti-Goeze" and "Nathan the Wise."

Meantime, however, Lessing had given to Germany its most perfect, if not its greatest tragedy, "Emilia Galotti," which was the embodiment of all that the "Dramaturgy" had taught. He had had this play in hand since 1758, and in 1768 it was nearly finished when the collapse of the Hamburg "National Theatre" made him lay it aside once more. As "Minna" is the oldest comedy that holds the German stage to-day, so this is the oldest tragedy. As Goethe beautifully said: "It rose in Grecian majesty like the sacred isle of Delos, out of the deluge of Gottsched, Weisse, and Gellert, that it might mercifully receive the goddess in her travail." Later his admiration was somewhat more qualified. He became a little doubtful, as others have been also, whether there was æsthetic justification for the climax of the tragedy.

"Emilia Galotti" is the Roman "Virginia," a daughter killed by her father to save her imperilled honor, but she is "a bourgeois Virginia" in modern garb, and quite without the political relations of Livy's story. But the drama is none the less political. Lessing's description of the petty court of a vicious princeling was felt to contain such elements of truth readily applicable to German *Residenzen* that more than one galled jade winced, and the court of

Gotha actually forbade the representation. The Brunswick authorities were more sane, though not less guilty, yet we can but feel with Caroline Herder that "it took a brave man to present that piece at that court." For indeed it held the mirror up to the most wretched time of German division, a time that is branded by the sale of the Hessians to England, of slaves at home to crush liberty abroad. That the scene was laid in Italy did not make the application less obvious, and though Lessing had made his satire so general that it could be referred to no one German court, it cannot but appear to the reader to-day as a prelude, and in some degree as a palliation, for the great Revolution that followed hard upon it.

This political effect is much heightened by the fact that Lessing is truer to nature and to justice as he found them than to ideal nature and poetic justice. When Emilia had found her only safety in death, while neither the weak sentimental prince nor his wicked counsellor feared any avenger of their crime, the auditors could not but realize that it was under these conditions that they themselves lived, and perhaps they might be roused by the fearful diagnosis of the social disease to look to themselves for the remedy. Goethe was right to call such a tragedy "full of understanding, wisdom, insight into the world, of an immense culture, beside which we now (1812) are already becoming barbarians." This "we" is addressed to men such as Schlegel, who could find in "Emilia" only "a good example of dramatic algebra, a piece of pure reason, brought forth in sweat and pain,

at which we wonder shivering, and shiver as we wonder."

Schiller found "Emilia," as he did all of Lessing's dramas, too relentlessly simple for his taste. To him, as to Goethe, the logic seemed too severe; but the best of later critics, among them Gervinus and Stahr, justify the catastrophe. It has been most admirably defended also by Kuno Fischer, whose brilliant analysis of the pyschological elements in the characters of this play is a masterpiece of philosophical criticism.[1] "Piety and obedience" seem to Fischer the virtues that make Emilia "so timid and so decided, so weak and so strong in will; so weak that she never controls her first impressions and does not feel that she has strength for a slight resistance, so strong that she needs not to seek but already possesses in herself strength for the last and uttermost resistance, the strength to die." This child, that at first has no other will than her mother's, is thus at last able to move and to subject to her will the will of her father, so much stronger than her own, because no power can induce her to return to a world whose enticements she has once experienced, whose inmost rottenness she has fully recognized. And as Fischer concludes, "Is not this a tragedy to shake the very soul?" No wonder, then, that, as Devrient, himself an actor, observes, "In every rôle of 'Emilia Galotti' the player's art never comes to an end;" for, as Eckhof, another historian of the drama, says. "When the author dives into the sea of human thought and

[1] Lessing als Reformator, i. 247 seq.

passion the actor must dive after him, until he find him."

But though the catastrophe is to be fully justified, it does not at first seem so to-day ; and the reason of this is that, by the very influence of Lessing and such as he, Germany has been delivered from the conditions that are here weighed in the balance. It is noteworthy that the doubting voices are all raised after the Revolutionary thunder has cleared the air, for the contemporary adverse criticism, partly the result of personal spite, was petty in the extreme.

"Emilia Galotti" closes Lessing's work as a reformer of the German drama; for "Nathan der Weise," though still presented on the stage, is to be regarded rather as a philosophical work in dramatic form, the key-stone of the arch that unites his ethical studies to those theological controversies that were to fill his later years. But before entering on this last phase of his labor for the emancipation of Germany the story of his life shall be carried through the brief sunshine of his marriage to the great sorrow of his wife's early death.

No year of Lessing's life was brighter than that which followed his long deferred marriage with Eva König. Each word that is preserved from the year 1777 adds a new detail to the picture of their happy home. A promised pension and what had been recovered of his wife's estate seemed to secure him for the first time from care for his daily bread. The stimulus of his new relation, the friends who came to his hospitable board, the hopes that their union

would not lack its crowning blessing, all combined to give his mind new strength and elasticity. One of his guests, the young Spittler, writes: "These were three of the happiest and most instructive weeks of my life. . . . I do not know if you are acquainted with Lessing personally. I can assure you he is the greatest friend of man, the most active promoter of all learning, the most helpful and affectionate patron. A visitor becomes so intimate with him that unconsciously he will almost forget with what a great man he has to do." And he was pathetically anxious that all who loved him should sympathize with his new happiness. He invites once and again his brother and his Berlin friends to visit him. But it is fitting that the story of his joy should be brief. On Christmas eve, 1777, his wife bore him a son, who died on Christmas day. The mother lingered till the 10th of January, only to follow her child.

Lessing's letters during this terrible fortnight of bereavement and heart-rending anxiety are among the classics of pain. "I seize," he writes to a friend, "a moment when my wife is lying senseless to thank you for your kind sympathy. My joy was only short, and I was so sorry to lose him, this son, for he had so much sense, so much sense. Do not think that my few hours of fatherhood have made me already such an ape of a father. I know what I say. Did it not show his sense that they had to pull him into the world with forceps, and that he became so soon disgusted with his new abode. Was he not wise in seizing the first chance to leave it again? To be

sure, the hasty fellow drags his mother away with him, too, for there is little hope left that I shall save her. I wished, for once, to be happy like other men, but it has succeeded ill with me." And again after the final catastrophe, he writes: "My wife is dead. I am glad there cannot be many more such trials left for me to go through, and am wholly calm." Here the irony is appalling. A few days later he says: "I must begin again to totter on my way alone;" and he breaks out in the repeated cry: "If you had only known her! If you had only known her! I fear you will never see me again as our friend Moses (Mendelssohn) found me, so quiet, so contented within my four walls." Again he writes: "I am too proud to acknowledge myself unhappy, — only set the teeth and let the boat drift at the mercy of winds and waves. Enough that I will not upset it myself." And so he set to work again with sad courage, and in three years of intense controversial activity, crowned with the great eirenicon, "Nathan the Wise," he brought to a dignified close a life that was itself his greatest tragedy. The immediate cause of this last and most serious controversy were some posthumous essays of Reimarus, a free-thinker of Hamburg and friend of Lessing, who edited his papers. It did not follow that Lessing was himself a free-thinker, or disposed to agree with his dead friend. But he believed with his whole soul, like every consistent Protestant, in freedom of discussion. At first, so far as he took personal part in the debate that these essays caused, he stood on the plane of Lutheran orthodoxy, which

he undertook to reconcile with what is called the "higher criticism" of the Scriptures by his theory of the "Education of the Human Race," or, as we might say, of the "development of doctrine." "The letter is not the spirit and the Bible is not religion," he said, and here we have the essence of a position that he was the first to assert in Germany, though perhaps he did not wholly discern the necessary results of a doctrine, which indeed our own generation is just beginning to perceive.

"Christianity moves on its calm, eternal course. Eclipses do not draw the planets from their orbits. But the sects of Christianity are its phases, which can be preserved only by a pause in all nature, so that sun, planet, and observer shall remain at the same point. God preserve us from such a fearful pause." Thus, according to Lessing, we do not yet know the capabilities of our religion. To him, in his essentially Protestant nature, Christianity is not historical, it is not the faith once delivered to the saints, it is a philosophy of life, and essentially personal. So it has been said that his religion "rests in feeling, and reveals itself in love." He himself said: "To base the truth of religion on the historical probability of miracles is to hang eternity on a spider's web." He found, as we have seen, a surer note of true religion in its power "to bring us back everywhere to the beautiful."

It is not the province of the literary essayist to revive a forgotten, much less to fan an existing, theological controversy; but it is essential to bear these

utterances of Lessing in mind if one is to understand the significance of his last years. It is not the question here what part of truth he saw or failed to see, but rather to show what position he took as an independent seeker for truth, — a man who said, and thought, that it was better error should be taught than that free speech should be stifled.

Reimarus' "Fragments" called in question the historical bases of Christianity, and the controversy over them raged thick and fast throughout Germany. The leader of the obscurantists was Goeze, a Lutheran pastor of Hamburg, a man whom Lessing esteemed personally, as appears from his diary. And he led a numerous band, while at first almost the sole defender of free discussion was Lessing. Once more it is well to state that there was no controversy about particular dogmas. On one side was a stalwart zeal for truth that feared no new light, on the other was narrow Lutheran orthodoxy, so sure of truth as to dare to stifle thought. The issue cannot be stated better than in Lessing's own words: "The worth of a man," he says, "lies not in the truth that he possesses or believes that he possesses, but in the honest endeavor that he puts forth to secure that truth; for not in the possession of, but by the search for truth, are a man's powers enlarged, and it is in this alone that his ever-growing perfection consists. Possession fosters content, indolence, pride. If God had in his right hand all truth, and in his left only the ever-active impulse after truth, though with the condition of constant erring, I would humbly turn to the

left hand and say: Father, give me this. Pure truth is for thee alone."

Now between such a position and the self-constituted Hamburg pope there was no truce possible, and Goeze exerted the whole force of his practised vituperation in his very first attack, while the German language has probably never attained a higher pitch of eloquent indignation than in Lessing's famous "Absagungsbrief," a challenge to his opponent, in which he promises never to yield so long as he can hold a pen.

Nobly he kept his promise. The pamphlets of his opponents have found their place to-day in what Lowell has aptly called the "herbarium of Billingsgate;" but his letters will long continue to be read for their lofty eloquence, their biting wit, and their dramatic vivacity. They mark a distinct advance in German prose style, already so much indebted to Lessing that he might be called its re-creator. And they mark also a permanent gain in the religious life of Germany, a gain that few have since been bold enough to assail. The pamphlet war came at last to a sudden end. Goeze had confidently challenged Lessing to tell him what he meant by "Christian religion." This shifted the scene, and in his "Necessary Answer to a very Unnecessary Question" Lessing says that to him personally the Christian religion is contained in the creeds of the first four centuries, which he goes on to show would form a true basis of union for all Christians, and so the wisest platform for the German state church. The unex-

pected reply astonished and confounded his opponents. They were silent. "Nowhere a sound," said Lessing. "Even every frog in the swamps is dumb."

So the controversy closed, but out of its bitterness was to come a sweet fruit, the dispassionate expression of its results embalmed in the classical form of "Nathan the Wise." It is strange to think that in order to write this masterpiece Lessing was obliged to borrow money from a noble-minded Jew of Hamburg that he might have bread to eat till it could be offered for sale (1779).

The essential idea of "Nathan" is that men should be tolerant, that they should not presume "the necessary universality of their religion." That this idea was not new in Lessing's mind is clear from his early dramas, "The Freethinker" and "The Jews." Elsewhere, too, Lessing had taught that virtue rests in action, not in belief, and he could truly say: "Nathan's disposition toward all positive religions has always been mine." But though the hero of the drama is a Jew and one of its noblest characters a Mohammedan, while those who represent intolerance and vulgar prejudice are nominally Christians, the drama is none the less essentially Christian in its ideals. Indeed that is precisely why Christians are here chosen for reprobation, since, as Shakspere aptly says: —

> "Sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds,
> Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

Intolerance is never so intolerant as in a Christian, vulgar prejudice never so vulgar. A good Jew, Les-

sing seems to say to us, is better than a bad Christian. With the bad Jew we have no need to concern ourselves. It must be clear that only the teaching of human brotherhood, which is essentially Christian, could make possible this lofty conception of general toleration.

As a philosophic essay in dramatic form "Nathan" holds a unique place in German literature; but judged solely as a drama, it has obvious and great faults. Lessing thought it would probably never be put on the stage, and said (April 18, 1779) that if it were acted it would produce but little effect. And he did not live to see his foreboding disproved. But "Nathan" has long become popular in all the great theatres of Germany, and all its great actors have essayed the rôle of the magnanimous Jew. At first, however, the reception accorded to the work was cold, owing to the machinations of the Lutheran party, and to the ease with which they could twist the drama to an irreligious meaning, that deceived the thoughtless. They even secured its prohibition in several parts of Germany. It was not until the early years of the present century that the literary public began to realize the deep beauty and profound wisdom of this almost the last gift of their great emancipator.

For the end was coming fast. In the two years that followed the appearance of "Nathan" he pursued that lofty theme in his "Education of the Human Race," and extended its principles to a political sphere in the "Conversations for Free Masons."

The preface to this last book contains a passage characteristic of the essay and of the man. He addresses the Duke of Brunswick: "I, too," he says, "have been at the fountain of truth. I have drawn from it; how deeply, he only can judge from whom I await permission to draw still deeper. The people languish long and are perishing." These words have a bold ring when we recall that they were addressed to the man who was to lead the coalition against the French Revolutionists at Valmy. Instead of the permission to draw deeper, came the censorship upon what was drawn already. The duke knew that the rotten props of his political house would not bear shaking. He had no mind to hear again what Lessing had said in his "Dramaturgy," that "there was no German nation." It is therefore from posthumous papers that we learn that Lessing had already conceived of German unity under one sovereign, and had put his finger with accurate diagnosis on the causes of the political lethargy of his time. Indeed, he anticipated very exactly the course that the revolution actually took in Germany in the rearousing of national life that we associate with the year 1848. But in these "Conversations for Free Masons" there are other sayings also that point with the finger of the seer to a purer republican socialism than has yet been realized, or than bourgeois republicans would desire. No wonder the duke, who was even then selling his subjects to England for the American war, felt that here or never was the place for the censor's pencil.

In these last writings Lessing seems to have his

eyes fixed on the distant prospect. In all of them there is a far-off objectivity. Yet he is no visionary, but rather a seer to whom the hard and bitter experience of the world has taught its last lesson of self-denying wisdom. He wrote always in the room where his wife had died, with mind erect, like a sentinel on guard, yet with his heart reaching out to another world, and his body gradually giving way under the long strain, "not sick, but far from well," as he said, until at last, while on a visit to Brunswick, he broke down completely, and died after a brief illness, February 15th, 1781.

The last scene was striking. He had seemed slightly better that day, and toward evening some friends called to see him. While they were waiting in an adjoining room suddenly the sick man himself appeared at the door. With an heroic presentiment of the end he had bidden his attendant dress him, but his face already bore the marks of death, and, it is said, had a strange unearthly glory. He went to his weeping step-daughter, Amalie König, and affectionately pressed her hand. Then he made a courteous bow to the guests. Already he could speak no more; his feet failed him, and hardly had their kind hands laid him on a sofa when he expired.

The loss was felt most by the greatest. Goethe, who had never met him, wrote: "Less than a quarter of an hour before I heard of his death I had made a plan to visit Lessing. We lose much in him, more than we realize." So thought the young man of thirty-two. And to the old man of seventy-six the

stature of his great predecessor had grown grander by distance. "We need a man like Lessing," he said to Eckermann [Oct. 15, 1825]. "For he is great by his character and tenacity of will. Clever and cultured men there are in plenty, but where is such a character?" The venerable Gleim was even more emphatic in his funeral verses that closed with the words: "God said, Let there be light, and Leibnitz came. God said, Let darkness be, and Lessing died."

In a poem by Eliza Reimarus, Truth is made to claim Lessing as her peculiar champion, and this seems to have been the general contemporary feeling so far as it had free expression. But the orthodox leaders found new courage to kick the dead lion. By their request the press of Hamburg was forbidden to print any obituary notice or poem upon him who has ever been the chief of her literary stars. The Duke of Brunswick, whom Lessing had served beyond his deserts, did indeed bury at the State expense one who had no wealth to leave as the result of a life devoted to the common good. But the grave was left without a memorial, and for a time men actually forgot the spot that Germany now honors with a noble monument.

For the fame of Lessing grows as his age recedes and as the old order changes. Goethe has observed that "Lessing lingers in the region of contradiction and doubt. Critical distinctions are his strongest side." This alone would make him sympathetic to our questioning age. Then, too, as the perspective

recedes and men and theories come to take their due proportions, we see him more and more as he was, a noble, unselfish, truth-loving, man ; gentle and charitable to all, stern only in his hatred of cowardice, hypocrisy, and falsehood. More and more we learn to estimate what he did. He restored the drama to Germany, he gave her true canons of æsthetic and dramatic criticism ; he released her from the fetters of a petrified orthodoxy, and taught her to breathe the free air of a more tolerant and loftier Christianity ; he opened to her social and political life vistas of republican liberty. More than all, he gave her sons the example of a devoted life, which poverty and suffering could not daunt, which even his brief happiness could not weaken or divert from its loftiest aims. Well might Goethe say : —

" While thou wast living we honored thee as one of the gods ;
Now thou art dead presides over our spirits thy spirit."

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG GOETHE.

"NATURE wanted to see how she looked and she created Goethe." So said Heine, the most brilliant of his continuators. The literature that has gathered around this great name during our century is so vast that it might form the study of years. Every phase of his genius has been made the subject of monographs, every principal work has called forth elaborate commentary. A review is devoted solely to the interests and investigations of those who make him a special study, and he who approaches Goethe to-day with the thought of saying or discovering what is new must confine his attention to a narrow field, or, if he would grasp the whole, he must be willing to devote a large share of his life to the task. Most helpful in estimating the place and importance of Goethe's various works and periods will be found the criticisms of Wilhelm Scherer, Erich and Julian Schmidt, and Hermann Grimm. For the life of Goethe, Düntzer is probably the most meticulously accurate, Lewes the most entertaining. This essay owes much to all of these students, as well as to study of the original works themselves.

Goethe was born at Frankfort, August 28th, 1749. Both the place and his parents are significant for his youthful development, and both bring us into new fields. Wieland and Lessing had been sons of clergymen, Herder a schoolmaster's boy, all in very narrow circumstances. Goethe sprang from the commercial class, then closely affiliated with political life in what remained of the "Free Cities." His paternal grandfather had been a tailor and inn-keeper, a prosperous and generous man, as it seems, for he gave his son a good education, so that he developed a taste for travel, which he gratified by an extended tour in Italy. With the advantages of such culture, John Caspar Goethe achieved the distinction of *Reichsrath*, or Imperial Counsellor, and though never very rich, seems always to have been in easy circumstances. In 1748 he married Catherine Elizabeth Textor, or Weber, as the family sometimes called themselves in this generation and afterward. Johann Wolfgang was the first of six children, but only a sister Cornelia survived to be the companion of his young manhood.

Goethe's father, the Counsellor, seldom unbends from his philistine self-satisfaction as he appears in the brilliant pages of Goethe's autobiographical "Dicht ungund Wahrheit." But the mother was a very remarkable woman, and one of the most sympathetic figures in German literature. "Simple, hearty, joyous, and affectionate, she was the delight of children and (later) the favorite of poets and princes." Her very household name, *Frau Aja*, though derived from an old ballad, seems to suggest bustling, good-

humored hospitality. She was not highly educated, but she had a happy faculty of rapid assimilation, so that she was no unworthy companion or correspondent of persons of deeper culture or higher station. That she was a mother at eighteen seemed only to renew her youth. "I and my Wolfgang," she said, "have always held fast to each other, because we were both young together." His childhood and youth owed far more to her direct influence than to all else beside.

But Goethe came not only from a burgher family, he came from a commercial city, then even more than now a centre of German financial life. The men of whom we have spoken hitherto were all country bred. The young Goethe had around him all the busy life of the present and at the same time the monuments of ancient greatness, and of industrialism grafted on the feudal stock; for Frankfort, more perhaps than any other commercial centre, was and still is, at once very old and very new, the present jostles the past as in few cities of Germany; and the old and the new, in turn and together, could not fail to leave their impress on the brilliant and receptive boy.

As usual, there are many tales of his precocity. Let it suffice to say that at eight he had already made fair progress in German, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek, as written exercises still testify. This he owed chiefly to his father. The mother meantime was training his imagination in a very charming way, which she thus describes herself: "I was as eager as

the children themselves for the hours of story-telling. I was quite curious about the future course of my own improvisation, and any invitation which interrupted these evenings was unwelcome. There I sat, and Wolfgang held me with his large black eyes, and when the fate of one of his favorites was not according to his fancy, I could see the angry vein swell on his temples and watch him repress his tears. He often burst out with: 'But, mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor, even if he does kill the giant.' And when I made a pause for the night, promising to continue the story on the next day, I was sure that meanwhile he would think it out for himself, and so he often stimulated my imagination. When I turned the story according to his plan and told him that he had found out the dénouement, he was all fire and flame, and one could see his little heart beating underneath his dress." A charming picture, truly, of the girl-mother and her boy.[1]

Goethe was but four years old when his nursery was enlivened by a puppet-show, another stimulus to imagination on which he lays much stress in his novel, "Wilhelm Meister." Except for a brief interval which was not a pleasant experience he never went regularly to school, but had lessons at home under his father's eye. Already he had a strong feeling of his superiority. "I am not satisfied with what does for other people," said the little aristocrat

[1] She died in 1808. Her charming letters have been recently published by the Goethe Society of Weimar. See also "Nineteenth Century," April, 1894, p. 649, and Heinemann, "Goethe's Mutter."

of seven; and again, when they tried to correct his pompous gait, he gravely answered: "I begin with this. By and by I will distinguish myself in another way."

When he was ten the French troops occupied Frankfort. This contributed materially to Goethe's culture. It polished his French and gave him wider acquaintance both with the ways of the great stage of the world and the little stage of the Frankfort theatre, where the youngster became an *habitué* of the green-room, and at twelve fought a bloodless duel, after which the two combatants were reconciled over glasses of almond milk. Goethe's early dramatic essays were due no doubt to reminiscences of these theatrical days.

He continued to study books and men at Frankfort till he was 16, when his father sent him to Leipzig to study law. But already he had found time to become a blighted being and to recover his heart again with the facile mobility of youth. In after life he seldom repeated the experience of loving in vain, for he fascinated all who came within the sphere of his influence.

Leipzig, in 1765, was rather a home of the classic muses than of the Christian virtues. Gottsched was still a power, and French notions prevailed, not in literature alone, but in the unrestrained society of that city, the "little Paris" of Germany. Goethe's student letters show how quickly he caught the spirit which accorded so well with his own nature. A citation is worth more than pages of comment on

these three years of his life. On October 20, 1765, he writes to Riese: "To-day I have heard two lectures, — Böhme on law, Ernesti on Cicero's Orator. That'll do, won't it? Next week we shall have philosophy and mathematics. I have n't seen Gottsched yet. He is married again. She is 19, he 65; she is 4 feet high, he is 7; she is as thin as a herring, he is as broad as a feathersack. I make a great figure here, but as yet I am no dandy. I sha'n't be either. It takes an effort to be industrious. In society, concerts, theatre, feasts, and drives, as the weather permits. Oh, but it goes gloriously. Yet it costs. Devil knows how my purse suffers. Stay! rescue! stop! Don't you see them running? There go two louis d'or! Help! There goes another! Heavens! Another couple are gone! Groschen are here as kreutzer are with you in the empire. But one can live cheaply, so I hope to get through with 300 thalers, — what do I say? — with 200, not counting what has already gone to the devil."[1]

His letters to his sister, too, are full of overflowing spirits, — sometimes in French, then a little English, and even English verse, lame enough to be sure. He likes to remember the Frankfort girls, and has a word now and then about his Leipzig flames. At the same time, too, he was writing love songs, partly for the composer Breitkopf, his friend, partly, it seems, for the use and behoof of love-lorn acquaintances. He now began to take an interest in art and to study the technique of engraving, and so prepared himself to

[1] Goethe, Briefe (Weimar, Bohlau), i. 14, 15.

appreciate the "Laokoon," which was to form an epoch in his poetic development.

In all this he was learning much more about life than about law, and exercising himself in metres and private theatricals more zealously than in Ulpian or Justinian. Add to all that, a genuine and tantalized love for Kätchen Schönkopf, a lively young girl of nineteen, at whose house Goethe regularly dined. This fascinating coquette teased him not a little, as we see from his letters, though in the embellished autobiography he has seen fit to reverse the relations, and it was in the same more flattering form that he embodied his experience in "Die Laune des Verliebten." For all through Goethe's life it was his author's instinct to put into literary form every experience that came to him, and thus to obtain toward it an objective position. It is in this sense that he says: "All my works are confessions of my life."

These lively years at Leipzig seem gradually to have undermined his health, and in this physically weak state he naturally saw things from their seamy side. If life had ever presented itself to him with any idealist glamor he was soon and permanently disillusioned. It is strange, almost sad, to find a young man of eighteen with such worldly wise views of life as find expression in "Die Mitschuldigen," The Fellow Sinners, who after showing nearly every variety of vice and meanness find it convenient to agree together to forgive and forget. It is indeed the moral of the Woman taken in Adultery, but it comes with a painful cynicism from the student's pen. We can

see, however, from these first dramatic efforts of Goethe that he was sure to be a realist in intention. As one of his friends wrote: "With Goethe you are always on *terra firma*." He idealizes neither the world nor individual characters. As Lewes puts it, "His drama is without a chorus. Goethe seldom tells you what an object is like. He tells you what it is." His realism shows itself thus not alone in matter but in form also.

The autumn of 1768 found Goethe decidedly ill and glad to return to Frankfort, where he remained sick and convalescent till April, 1770. Meantime Kätchen married, so that episode was closed, not without some pain. He plucked up courage and wrote to her cheerfully, sending little gifts; but he never saw her again. This year and a half of fruitful leisure gave Goethe first of all a deeper insight into the critical work of Lessing, from which he gained a sharper æsthetic sense and a more balanced mind. It was then, too, that he began those scientific studies in his father's attic that later in life were to make part of his rounded fame. An amiable acquaintance, Fräulein von Klettenberg, the *Schöne Seele* of "Wilhelm Meister," became deeply interested in his spiritual condition, and from her he got at least an objective knowledge of pietistic religious experience, though he proved himself a refractory subject. It was through her, also, that he became interested in alchemy and kindred lore, which proved useful in the elaboration of "Faust."

His father wished him to continue his studies, but

not at Leipzig, so he went to Strasburg, then a French city, but German in its population and spirit. This was a good field for cosmopolitan training, and he brought to it a mind sobered by experience and reflection, while his returning health had brought with it good spirits. So he set himself earnestly both to learn dancing and to pass his preliminary legal examination. He had already begun work on his dissertation when, in September, he met Herder, then in Strasburg on account of his eyes, and, in October, made the fateful acquaintance of Friederike Biron, the winning daughter of the pastor of Sesenheim. The dissertation yielded to the fascinations of scholarly intercourse and the charms of the pastoral maiden.

The good parson and his family suggested to Goethe the "Vicar of Wakefield," and in the drama that followed it is impossible to acquit Goethe altogether of playing a part akin to Burchill's in that well-known tale. In the idyllic surroundings of Sesenheim, Friederike had seemed to him altogether charming. He had loved her and he had let her love him. But her visit to Strasburg broke the pastoral spell. He had no wish, he might have felt he had no moral right, to fetter his fortunes or his genius, to a country girl, however charming. But when he left Strasburg, in August, 1771, he left behind him Friederike's broken heart, and his own was not unscathed. He carried with him for years a sense of a wrong to be atoned. In the Maria of "Götz," the Marie of "Clavigo," the Clärchen of

"Egmont," and the Gretchen of "Faust" we may see so many efforts to cleanse his bosom of the perilous stuff that preyed upon his heart; from these he gradually won the purely objective position that characterizes the episode in "Dichtung und Wahrheit." But whatever he may have felt of passion for Friederike was soon blunted by a genial sense of youthful egotism. She carried her simpler love through weary years of faithful service to a consumptive's grave, and died, unmarried, in 1813.

Meantime the long months of Herder's clinical confinement had fostered a close intimacy with Goethe, one of the few companions of his sick-room. They read together Herder's essay on the "Origin of Language," as well as the "Vicar of Wakefield" at the very time that Goethe was putting it into action. They talked much of the great literatures of France and England, and Herder taught Goethe that distrust of French critical canons and that truer appreciation of Shakspere that Lessing had already proclaimed. To him, too, Goethe owed his appreciation of the essentially national character of all poetic development, which, with brief aberrations during the height of Schiller's influence, remained his constant conviction. And, more than all, he led the young Goethe to appreciate Rousseau, whose teaching was one of the great disintegrating forces of the eighteenth century. This is reflected in "Götz," and even more clearly in the "Sorrows of Werther," which would be hardly explicable without Rousseau's "Nouvelle Héloïse."[1]

[1] Fester, in his "Rousseau und die Deutsche Geschichtsphiloso-

Herder's influence on Goethe was in every way furthering. Even his relentless, and doubtless carping, criticism of the younger poet was a needed chastening for one who was already revolving the strange mediæval story of the iron-handed knight and the weird legend of Dr. Faust.

Herder was a good teacher, as we know, clear, forceful, proselyting. Yet he seems to have been blissfully unconscious that he was talking to a superior genius. Goethe was to him a "good fellow, somewhat frivolous and sparrowlike." Indeed, the younger poet fell at first quite under the influence of this momentarily superior critical mind. He compares himself to Jacob wrestling with the angel; he wishes he could live always with Herder, and in imagination holds constant conversation with him. But by and by he regained a more sober judgment, saw that Herder was rather conceited, and answered a somewhat supercilious letter of his from Bückeburg, with the significant declaration that he preferred to be one of the least of planets to revolve about the sun, than the satellite of the greatest of all planets. Herder was indeed but five years his senior, and perhaps even then jealous of the rising star.

This meeting with Herder at Strasburg was the beginning of a long intercourse, — it can hardly be called friendship in its later phases, — but it was several years before they met again. Goethe returned

phie," attributes to Wieland the chief part in familiarizing Germany with Rousseau's social theories. His co-operation is certain, but in Goethe his influence was less direct than that of Herder.

to Frankfort and began the nominal practice of law. He had published nothing as yet under his own name, being never eager for literary notoriety; but in Frankfort he contributed numerous critical notices to the press and began serious work on "Götz," which he intended to be a proclamation of the new liberties of the German stage, more daring than the cautious Lessing would have ventured or approved. The young bloods of Germany, and Goethe with them, had caught the new spirit, and in this decade of "storm and stress," as it was called from one of their dramas, they held high carnival, following Shakspere blindly and, as was natural, showing more of his faults than of his spirit.

In this movement Goethe's "Götz von Berlichingen" takes the same place that Hugo's "Preface to Cromwell" and "Hernani" take in the French drama. Götz was a robber knight of the sixteenth century, from whose naïve autobiography Goethe takes a series of pictures, bright with local color, to which his own imagination adds as many more. In its first form the play was finished in 1771, but this proved too lawless even for Goethe's taste at that period, and it did not see the light till it was printed in 1840, as a curious monument of a strange time of ferment. In a modified form it was published in 1773, and again revised on a later occasion for the Weimar stage. In his autobiography Goethe tells the story of its first composition, confessing that his dramatic construction had gone beyond all theatrical limits in seeking to realize the life of this "noblest of Ger-

mans," as he appeared to the young Goethe, because his simple sturdy independence foreshadowed the struggles of the eighteenth century in its reassertion of individualism.

For in the play, more even than in Götz's own chronicle, the hero is the representative of native rebellion against the fetters that the Roman law and church laid on the Teutonic spirit. Relics of these fetters could be seen everywhere in Germany in Goethe's day. The glaring discord between theory and practice was as strong as ever. To the young Goethe the only progress practicable seemed to lie in the development of individuality, and so he brings before us "Götz" as the ante-type of Young Germany, of the eccentric genius of the "Storm and Stress." This will account for its immediate and universal success. It struck a responsive chord in every heart, and made its still unnamed author, as even Herder was constrained somewhat grudgingly to admit, the anonymous literary leader of his time.

If Götz's own story furnished the outline, Goethe allowed himself a free hand in filling in the picture. Many of his characters are new. Thus Maria and Weislingen suggest his own experiences with Friederike at Sesenheim, Lerse seems to have been studied from a Strasburg friend of the same name, and Adelheid, that evil genius, fair but satanic, seems one of those free creations of fancy that are rare in Goethe's works.

In "Götz" all the unities are thrown to the winds. It is not in any sense a Shaksperian drama, it is the

dramatic presentation of an epoch, a succession of pictures. The characters reveal but do not explain themselves any more than they would in real life. Hence Lessing thought that its influence on the development of dramatic art was retardative in spite of the immense stimulus that it gave to dramatic production; for it was, as a critic of the time said, in any case "a captivating monstrosity."

It may comfort aspirants to literary fame to know that Goethe, who had already sought in vain a publisher for "Die Mitschuldigen," printed "Götz" at his own expense and, thanks to a pirated edition, lost money by the venture, while all Germany rang with its praises, and imitations sprang up like mushrooms over night. A bookseller even offered him good terms for "a dozen similar plays," so true is it that nothing succeeds like success.

Before this appearance of the revised "Götz" Goethe had been through a new and fruitful experience of love. At his father's wish he had gone to Wetzlar to further his law practice. While there he had met and loved at first sight Charlotte Buff; but she happened to be engaged to his friend Kestner, who indeed had introduced Goethe to his charming betrothed, and her eleven younger brothers and sisters for whom she cared like the executive little person that she was. Neither Kestner nor Lotte were deceived as to his feelings, nor as it seems particularly disturbed by them. Indeed, Goethe, at a little party at Lotte's house, actually presented Kestner with a book in which he had written dedicatory verses ending

with the request that his friend would never forget one who had loved him and — loved with him. "How much nobility on all sides," is Lewes' singular comment on this rather delicate situation, which Goethe finally solved by taking a sudden departure with never a word of farewell (Sept. 11, 1772). His aunt, with singular fatuity, wrote to Lotte to apologize for her nephew's ill-manners. The spirited girl wrote back to ask why she had not taught him better. The lovers were sorry to lose him, and Lotte, Kestner says, had a good cry over it. By and by Goethe furnishes the wedding ring, and the first boy is named Wolfgang, after their distinguished friend.

And yet on his way back to Frankfort this facile young man managed to get up heart for a flirtation with Maximiliane von Laroche, the future mother of his last adorer, Bettina von Arnim-Brentano. But from Frankfort he kept up a lively correspondence with the happy lovers. He tells Lotte he has found "a new maiden," presumably Antoinette Gerock, and soon after he found a second flame, Anna Münch, for whom he wrote "Clavigo." He had also the additional responsibility of consoling the just married Maximiliane "for the smell of oil and cheese and the behavior of her husband," as we learn from his friend, the somewhat cynical Merck.

Amid these varied distractions, and sobered by the absence of some dear friends, Goethe sought relief from Wetzlar memories by giving them literary expression in the "Sorrows of Werther," perhaps the

most beautiful piece of German prose that exists today, and certainly in its time revealing unimagined powers in the German tongue. This was published in 1774. Of course he sent Lotte a copy and with it a note to this happy mamma which is worth citing as characteristic of the time: "Lotte, how dear this little book is to me, thou wilt feel in reading it; and this copy is as dear to me as if it were the only one in the world. Thou must have it, Lotte; I have kissed it a hundred times, have kept it locked up, that no one might touch it. Oh, Lotte! . . . I wish each to read it alone, thou alone, Kestner alone, and each to write me a little word about it, Lotte. Adieu, Lotte." Kestner, as one may imagine, was not particularly edified at this enforced publicity. As for the letter itself, that is not passion, it is playful sentiment; and sentimentality, rather than strong passion, was the character of the period as reflected in the "Sorrows of Werther."

The eighteenth century had been a period of social and moral disintegration in Europe. Men had become restless, discontented. They felt that the present conditions could not last, but they saw no outlet; and so energies that might have been turned to political life were often wasted in gloomy introspection and morbid sentimentality. Rousseau had taught men to look fondly to the imaginary "state of nature" as an ideal, at all social law as a mistaken restraint. The will of men was weakened, while the scope of their desires was enlarged. They were ready to exchange "the clear world of Homer for the form-

less world of Ossian" then at the height of its fame in Germany. Such a generation might well be typified in Werther or in Weislingen, as indeed it was by the young Goethe in one phase of his multiplex character. A nightmare lay over the minds of men, and Goethe's morbid book touched a responsive chord in most varied breasts. Napoleon carried it with him to Egypt, while for the common folk it was peddled in the market-places in cheap editions. The clear-sighted and strong-headed Lessing was almost alone in demanding "a concluding chapter, and the more cynical the better." But for Goethe, here as so often, the very writing seemed to clarify his mind, and he became serene, sometimes even stoical. There were passing clouds, but there was no storm for the rest of his long life. He had conquered control of himself at last.

To a saner generation this story of the hopeless love of a man for his friend's wife, ending in his dispairing suicide, has an element of the childish and comic. Involuntarily one recalls Thackeray's doggerel ballad which tells the unadorned tale. But the suicide was as true to life then as the rest, though of course the victim was not Lotte's lover, but a certain Jerusalem, whom Goethe had met at Wetzlar, and whose tragic end under like circumstances Goethe, with an eye to realism, had invited Kestner to detail to him as circumstantially as possible. Werther is what Goethe saw he was tending to become when he fled from Lotte and Wetzlar. As some one has wittily said: "The other writers of the 'Storm and

Stress' were only patients; Goethe was patient and physician."

Almost immediately after the completion of "Werther" Goethe wrote "Clavigo," a play founded on the memoirs of Beaumarchais, which, though the first work published under his name, is of no very serious merit. "Such trash you must not write again," said the frank Merck; "others can do that." And now began a period of great creative fecundity, the fruits of which were to appear later in "Faust," "Prometheus," "Egmont," "Stella," and many minor poems. This activity was temporarily checked, probably to Goethe's ultimate gain, first by his attachment to Lili Schönemann, then, more durably, by his summons to the court of Weimar, both in the year 1775. The new love did indeed inspire "Erwin and Elmire" and some of Goethe's best lyrics. But he was not a comfortable lover; he was eccentric, Lili young and rather spoiled, and then he was not rich enough for the banker's daughter; and so, though at one time betrothed, the lovers drew apart again. This was the nearest approach that Goethe ever made to a love-match. His marriage, long deferred, was of quite a different character. Lili afterward married Baron von Turckheim, and bore nobly the misfortunes that came to her from the French Revolution. Goethe always remembered her tenderly to the last, while she preserved him in almost sacred memory, and in after years sought an opportunity to let him know indirectly how much she felt her moral nature owed to him. But by a strange fatality, the letter that she

had bidden a friend to write to him in 1795 reached the poet's hands thirty-five years later, as he was himself sinking to the grave. He pressed it to his lips, and wished its writer, "when a like occasion should come, as happy a refreshment."[1]

His final separation from Lili had hardly taken place (September, 1775) when welcome relief came to him in the invitation of Karl August to become a member of his court at Weimar, whither he went in November, gladly, though much against his father's will. That sturdy burgher could not but think of Voltaire and Frederic. But Karl August was a man of finer grain, though smaller mould, than the Prussian hero, and Goethe was not Voltaire.

In what it involved, the coming of Goethe to Weimar is the most important event for the literary life of Germany in this generation. It is from this year that Goethe's influence begins to be paramount wherever his language is spoken, so much that a distinguished critic has called the hundred years that followed "the century of Goethe."

Weimar, capital of the duchy of like name, was and is a pretty city, distinguished ever since the brilliant days of Karl August by a literary tone that has made it a pleasant residence for the cultured and for youth in search of culture. Before his time it had no promise of distinction. It is through him, almost solely, that it earned and merited the name of the German Athens.

[1] Hermann Grimm, Goethe, i. 275.

"Small among Germany's princes truly is mine,
Narrow and small is his land, moderate only his power."

said Goethe, in a poem whose thoughtful appreciation was better than adulation to his magnanimous friend. No other prince in Germany has ever done so much for literature, though few have had more slender means. And Karl August wins our sympathy, too, by his personal character, — full of plans for the welfare and prosperity of his subjects, unambitious for himself, very simple in his tastes, yet far from all austerity, with a healthy capacity for pleasure, and much of that robust joy of life that characterized Goethe. The prince lacked indeed his friend's high sense of personal dignity, so that he sometimes offended, not without cause, his high-minded, but prim and narrowly aristocratic wife, Luise. This princess stands with her namesake of Prussia in the minds of German women for what they consider noblest in German womanhood, but she had little sympathy with her husband's literary aspirations, and looked at first with suspicion on the men of genius whom he gathered around him as the companions of his hours of relaxation.

Weimar was then as now quiet, dignified, full of repose. It had perhaps 7,000 inhabitants and a fine park, but its great ducal residence had just been burned. Beautiful surroundings there were, too, — Berka, Ettersburg, and a little further Jena, loveliest of university towns, nestled amid its circling hills by the winding Saale, whose charms might almost rival the incomprehensible fascination, or shall we say the

fascinating incomprehensibleness, of the new school of metaphysicians, Hegel, Fichte, and others, that made its lecture-rooms famous over all the land. And to the west of Weimar was Eisenach, with its memories of Luther and the Minstrels' War (Sängerkrieg) on the Wartburg; and beyond, the glorious Thuringian Forest, all soon to be familiar to Goethe and his princely companion.

Between these two men the relation was at first very intimate, then, as each grew older and gained a more developed individuality, more formal, but cordial to the end. Not so, however, between them and the petty nobility of the court, who, with the Duchess Luise, looked jealously on the new favorite. Indeed it is clear that for many years art and literature at Weimar enjoyed only an artificial eminence, which the death of Karl August would have caused them to lose almost immediately. The prince's mother, Amalie, was his only aristocratic ally, — a charming young woman, then only thirty-six, who had done her son the inestimable service to make Wieland his tutor, and had learned Greek herself from the same genial teacher. No blue-stocking she; rather, a bright, joyous woman, a good dancer, fond of masked balls, and even of a little polite gambling. But she was not frivolous, for with all this lightheartedness she was a good executive officer and managed her duchy well during the minority of her son, while her correspondence with Goethe's mother shows a mind far above aristocratic prejudices. She even sent that estimable lady a pair of garters that she had knit

with her own princely hands, and addressed her as "Dear Mother," and "Dear Frau Aja." [1]

When Goethe came to Weimar Wieland was its literary pillar and his "Deutscher Merkur" its oracle. No other of the Weimar literati of 1775 deserves special mention unless it be Frau von Stein, one of Amalie's ladies-of-honor, who was to involve Goethe in a long platonic attachment that might seem calculated to have a great and valuable influence on his literary and moral development. That the influence was great there is no doubt; it had value, too, but it was not unmixed with disturbing elements, as will appear presently.

How Goethe was received in Weimar the genial Wieland, whom the young poet had satirized not long before,[2] may tell us as an unprejudiced witness. "How certainly I felt at the very first glance that he was a man after my own heart! How I loved the magnificent youth as I sat beside him at table. . . . Since that morning my soul is as full of Goethe as a dewdrop of the morning sun. . . . If Weimar can do anything his presence will accomplish it." In a strain of similar admiration Knebel, the translator of Lucretius and Propertius, writes: "He rose like a star in the heavens. Everybody worshipped him, especially the women," — Amalie first of all among them, for from the beginning she was fascinated with his genius. Socially, Weimar was ripe for the hero

[1] The letters of Duchess Amalie have been edited by Heinemann, who has added "Frau Aja's," also. (Leipzig: Seemann.)

[2] In his "Götter, Helden, und Wieland."

of the "Sorrows of Werther," and soon entered on an orgy of sentimentalism which, as usual, tended to relax the ties of social tradition and perhaps morality also. The gentlemen, the duke at their head, donned the dress of Werther, and the ladies that winter went skating under Goethe's tuition, masked as for a Mardi-Gras carnival. So he led the society of Weimar for months together such a frolic dance as it had never seen. This is the way he writes of it to his Aunt Fahlmer: "The girls here are very pretty and nice, and I am on good terms with every one of them." Again he tells this same tolerant correspondent how he lies and flatters to every pretty face, and has the advantage that he always believes what he has said, at least for a moment. "With the dowager, Amalie, I am on very good terms, and we carry on all sorts of jokes and tricks," but the prim Luise and he "live only in glances and syllables."

This round of gayety could not last forever, but the prudent Goethe took care that the enthusiasm should not flag while he was master of the revels. He slipped away from this danger, as he had done from that other at Wetzlar, and suddenly left for Waldeck. But, as Wieland said: "Weimar could no longer swim nor wade without him." Karl August insisted on his return, and in June of the next year made him Privy-Counsellor with a salary of 1200 thalers, then amply sufficient even for some luxury at this simple court. In writing to the poet's father of the matter, the duke says: "Goethe can have but one position, that of my friend; all others are beneath him." But

the duke was obliged to defend his action from carping critics at home who could see no good to come from giving literary men a share in the public affairs, which they had been accustomed to regard as their peculiar domain.

And so the gay life was resumed again, not much modified by the sermonizing of the scandalized Klopstock, who abandoned Goethe in disgust when he could not make him dance to his somewhat slow piping. There is no livelier picture, among the many that have come to us, of the best side of this gay life and carnival of genius than Gleim's story of his own experience there. "Soon after Goethe had written 'Werther,'" Gleim tells us[1] that he "came to Weimar and wanted to meet him. I had the last 'Musenalmanach' with me, and in the company where I was passing the evening I read a poem here and there. Meantime a young man, booted and spurred, in a short green hunting-jacket came in. I scarcely noticed it. He sat down opposite me and listened closely. I hardly know what it was about him that particularly struck me except his bright, black Italian eyes; but I was destined to know more of him. During a pause the gallant young sportsman, for such I supposed him, rose, and bowing most winningly, offered to relieve me in reading, lest I should get tired. I could not but accept so polite an offer and gave him the book. But, by Apollo, the Muses, and Graces, what was I to hear? At first things went smoothly enough. All at once, however, it was as

[1] The quotation, taken from Dünzer's Life, is somewhat condensed.

though some wild, wanton devil had seized the young reader, and I thought I saw 'The Wild Huntsman' bodily before me. He read poetry that was not in the 'Almanach' at all, burst out into all kinds of styles and dialects, hexameters, iambics, doggerel, wild and humorous fancies; and amid all this there came such noble, magnificent thoughts! As soon as the joke was discovered everybody laughed, but he put us all out of countenance in one way or another. Even my Mæcenasship had its turn in a little fable composed extempore in doggerel verses. 'That is either Goethe or the devil,' cried I to Wieland, who sat opposite. 'Both,' he answered."

Is not this a delightful picture of genial effervescence called forth by enthusiastic appreciation? It is only just to Goethe, however, to cite also Wieland's words, who assures us that "from the moment Goethe decided on becoming a man of business he conducted himself with blameless wisdom and all worldly prudence." This courtly life was indeed of great value to the poet's mental development. It gave him that intimate contact with aristocratic society and with the wider horizons of political life that reflected itself in the balanced calm of his later writings and contributed to make them the precious heritage of future generations, so that to-day Germans are even more under the influence of his mind than they are students of his work. To this man, who was to write "Faust," "Wilhelm Meister," and "Tasso," and even to the future author of "Hermann and Dorothea," that life of courtier and counsellor was necessary. Far from his

wasting time, as some have thoughtlessly averred, Providence could not have ordered it better for the full evolution of his genius than that he should pass the ten years from 1776 to 1786 in active public life at Weimar. But his sterling good sense did not suffer him to prolong this apprenticeship beyond what was for his best.

The first use that Goethe made of his influence with the duke was in favor of his old counsellor, Herder, to whom, in spite of the carping criticism that he had now outgrown, he felt full of gratitude. But Herder, as has been said, had aroused the bitter opposition of the conservative orthodox, and this opposition was naturally reflected on his supporter, who now found arrayed against him Duchess Luise, Baron Stein and his wife, the court chamberlain Goertz with the party of the old courtiers, and the church consistory. For the moment Goethe's influence overcame opposition, Herder was summoned, and, once at Weimar, could be left to win his own way. But against Goethe the basest slanders were continuously and industriously circulated, especially by Goertz and the "unco' guid" of the consistory, and it was some time before he disarmed this personal opposition by a devotion to the routine of his new duties that ended in extorting the praise of his fellow-counsellors and silenced envious tongues.

The outward history of Goethe's activity during the ten years that followed his official connection with Weimar can be briefly told. Ilmenau had been the scene of his gayest revels as the guest of Karl

August. Now its mines claimed the counsellor's attention, and to gather observations for their development he made, in 1777, a journey to the mining districts of the Harz, whence he brought back a fund of experience of land and people that was put to good use in his "Faust" and in other poems also. In 1778 he assumed the direction of the Court-Theatre, and in 1779 of the War Department, with its army of 650 men, and the more serious responsibility of the roads and bridges of the duchy. Into all departments he brought a spirit of reform and roused the duke to nobler aspirations by silent influence and even by direct admonition. And so at last he won the confidence even of Duchess Luise and of the unselfish element among the conservatives at court.

In the autumn of 1779 he accompanied the prince on a journey to Switzerland. Their route led them through Sesenheim, and there he met again Friederike Biron, who was sadly silent of the old relation as they revisited the scenes of their former wooing. Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein during his Swiss journey are among the classics of travel. It was there, too, that he composed "Jery and Bäteli," a light opera, for his theatre at the court, so that this experience also found literary expression. He returned to Weimar in January, 1780, and was immediately engrossed with administrative labors, "having to cook his ideas together with the army-bread," as he said. But his duties at Ilmenau had interested him in mineralogy, and he began at this period scientific studies that

were afterward to prove of much value. Yet political life was not the goal of Goethe's ambition. He chafed more and more as years went by under its restraints, and in 1786 Karl August was fain to give his friend unlimited leave of absence that he might visit Italy.

Those public activities from which he thus sought escape had been hardly consistent with immediate literary fertility, but yet one can see how through these years the fountain was gathering strength that it might burst out more fully and richly than ever. The work of this decade is almost wholly under the indirect influence of Frau von Stein, and much of it is directly caused by Goethe's relations to her. She was a lady seven years his senior, and the mother of seven children, never very beautiful and now showing traces of age and care; but her social, intellectual, and moral qualities had so won the poet that she held him faithful to her service for ten years, with no sacrifice of her dignity or self-respect.

Charlotte von Stein was the first woman whom Goethe had known intimately, who was socially his superior, intellectually capable of comprehending and sympathizing with him, and whose ethical views would not bend to his own. She was far from sharing the ardor of his feelings, though she could not but be flattered by them. With remarkable tact she preserved at once his love and his respect, and by making his life, as he said, "an enduring resignation," she gave his nature more refinement and self-control. If at times he broke through the bounds her sense of

propriety induced her to draw, there might be brief "stormy scenes;" but he always came back submissive after these "sun-showers of love" to her for whom he cannot find names of sufficiently extravagant endearment. He "worships" her, she is his "golden lady," his "holy fate," his "soother" and "comforter," his "dear angel."

This intimacy called forth a multitude of letters, that make an invaluable key to Goethe's life and work during these years. He writes to her almost daily and of almost everything from "Iphigenie" to sausages.[1] He does nothing without her counsel. Under her influence the old love of unfettered nature, of storm and stress, yields to a more conservative regard for law and custom. "Iphigenie" and "Wilhelm Meister" occupy the moments that he can snatch from administrative duties; but in the new flux of his mind neither can come to a satisfactory solution. And now, ever alert to put his own experiences into literary form, he found in the imprudent love of Tasso for a lady at the court of Ferrara an episode that suggested a possible catastrophe to his own situation, and this poet's tragedy became "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh," as he told Eckermann, during the entire duration of their relation, which however furthering it might be in some directions

[1] The letters were first published in 1848. Hers to him she prudently demanded and destroyed. His are best edited in the new Weimar edition. To give an idea of the frequency of the correspondence I have counted his letters for July–December, 1782. There are 135 dated, and 127 that bear no date many of which seem to belong to this period.

was in others obviously unnatural and unhealthy. Love cannot live on alms; what might have been endurable to a youth would seem humiliating to a man of high position, now ennobled and verging toward forty; he had got from her what she had to give him, and the instinctive impulse that had led him from Friederike and from Lotte, no doubt contributed [1] to the restlessness that made him look to Italy as a haven that he must reach at whatever cost, to save his genius. But before following him there it will be well to turn for a moment to a field of his literary activity that belongs peculiarly to this early period, — his lyric poetry.

It was almost wholly before his visit to Italy that Goethe wrote those lyrics which have given him in the popular estimation his high place — if it were not for Heine we might say his pre-eminent place — in this, the most popular, though not the highest, department of literature. Before his day, a truly national lyric poetry might have seemed well-nigh moribund. The poetic schools connected with the cities of Halle, Berlin, and Leipzig were essentially and even professedly artificial, and Klopstock's Odes could not hide their emptiness beneath their mock solemnity. The popular lyric existed unnoticed, a flower that had blushed unseen for generations till Herder discovered it. Goethe made Herder's discovery completely his own, and in this spirit his best lyrics were conceived and executed, the greater part of them before his

[1] Thomas, in his introduction to "Tasso," thinks this influence a "myth."

coming to Weimar, and during his first decade there.

The spontaneity of these songs is their chief charm. Without exception, they seem to have their origin in events and experiences of the poet's life, though the arrangement that he has given them in his works, by masking all chronology, makes it difficult to discover the immediate cause of some of them. Still, it is the chief episodes in his life that evoke the deepest lyrical tones, and the songs that refer to Friederike,[1] to Lili,[2] and to Frau von Stein [3] embrace the greater part of the gems of this early period. His friendship with Karl August, his Swiss journey, and a few ballads founded on tradition or on the events of the day, furnish the themes of nearly all the rest of the lyrics that have earned general popularity.[4] The songs of

[1] To her refer, among other poems: "Es schlug mein Herz, geschwind zu Pferde;" "Hand in Hand! und Lipp' auf Lippe;" "Kleine Blumen, kleine Blätter;" and "Wie herrlich leuchtet Mir die Natur."

[2] To her refer, among other poems: "Neue Liebe, neues Leben;" "Auf dem See;" "Lili's Park;" "Das Veilchen;" "Das Heideröslein;" "Der König in Thule."

[3] To Frau von Stein are directly due: "Rastlose Liebe;" "Wandrers Nachtlied;" "Ein Gleiches;" Liebesbedürfniss;" "Der Becher;" "Nachtgedanken;" "Ferne;" "An Lida;" "Versuchung;" "Warnung;" many epigrams, and the "Zueignung," originally intended for his "Geheimnisse."

[4] To Karl August we owe: "Einschränkung;" "Hoffnung;" "Sorge;" "Eigenthum;" "Seefahrt;" "Ilmenau." The wonderful "Song of the Spirits over the Waters" was written at the Falls of the Staubbach. Among the Ballads of the first Weimar period may be named: "Der Erlkönig;" "Der Fischer;" "Das Blümlein wunderschön."

Mignon in "Wilhelm Meister" were written toward the close of this period, and echo his restless longing for Italy, whither at last he stole away almost secretly, having ordered the affairs of the duchy so that it could best bear his absence while in that ancient home of art and culture he might gain clearer conceptions of literature and life in the bosom of classical antiquity.

CHAPTER V.

GOETHE'S MANHOOD AND OLD AGE.

THE Italian journey marks the most important epoch in the literary and moral development of Goethe. By it all his work that follows is separated in its inmost character from all that had gone before. Its nature is different. In Italy Goethe found at last his moral balance, and from his return until his death he went on his way among men with the serenity of perfect self-possession.

That land was full of associations for him. From his youth it had been a cherished project to make the tour which had so deeply impressed his father, and it is with an almost solemn feeling of the responsibility of so great an opportunity for culture that he writes of his laborious journey across the Alps and of the eagerness with which, when just arrived at Verona, he seized "the opportunity of developing his capacity of joyful reverence for what is great and beautiful." From Verona he went, as most German travellers do to-day, to Padua and Venice, where he stayed three weeks. But he grew more and more impatient, urged his course southward to Ferrara, then over the Apennines to Florence. But even here

the impetuous traveller would linger but three hours, so eager was he to tread the streets of the Eternal City. On October 9, 1786, he reached Rome.

The first weeks were naturally spent in learning to know his new home; but Rome cast her spell over him almost from the outset. He found himself more clear and composed than he had been for a long time, it seemed to him that his judgment of the world was more true, he felt as though "in the bosom of Abraham," cured of his mental agitation and "restored to the enjoyment of life and so to the enjoyment of poetry." This change came to him, of course, not from the Rome of 1786, but from its artistic treasures; and its immediate result was to unseal the creative poetic stream that had long flowed so scantily. By the middle of January, 1787, he was able to send to Weimar his "Iphigenie," which he had turned into classical iambics, as a first fruit of the new influences, a fruit produced not without trouble, for he calls it "a child of his sorrow." It was indeed still far from its present perfection of form. Yet he was sure that he was now on the right track, and in spite of the surprised and doubting voices that came to him from Weimar, he determined to do the same service by "Tasso," which alone of all his unfinished works he took with him on a journey to Naples and Sicily. But here other things attracted his interest, and he had accomplished little on it at his return to Rome, in June, 1787.

He remained a whole year in the Eternal City perfecting "Iphigenie," bringing "Egmont" and "Tasso"

to a close, and prosecuting zealously his artistic and botanical studies. Meantime his character had been modified by a new experience, for, following the custom of the time and place, he formed an attachment for a Roman girl, probably an artist's model. Though morally to be reprobated, this connection had evidently a valuable influence on his character. It aided in revealing to him the joy of life, disassociated now from the unnatural sentimentalism that had characterized his previous relations. He had shaken off the strained idealism of Frau von Stein, and had become naturalistic amid these classic surroundings. All this is reflected wonderfully in the "Roman Elegies," which for him who understands them, are as pure as paradise.[1] Life came to have new meaning and value to him, and when he left Rome at last, in April, 1788, it was with tearful eyes and a promise to return, which he was never destined to fulfil. On the 18th of June he was again in Weimar.

Goethe brought with him from Italy an essentially altered conception of "Faust," as will appear later, and three plays in a more or less complete condition, "Iphigenie," "Egmont," and "Tasso;" which it is well to treat together since they have points of suggestive similarity. The first of these, "Iphigenie," was in its earlier form a fruit of Weimar days and

[1] Afterward when Herder went to Rome, Goethe, half mindful of his own experience, half willing to tease the sentimental pastor's wife, told Frau Herder her husband would never be happy in Rome till he fell in love. But Herder saw life from another side only, and "Roman Elegies" were incomprehensible and wholly abhorrent to him.

of his relation to Frau von Stein. Here the mind-tossed Orestes recovers "clearness" again in his sister's angelic presence, as Goethe imagined he would do in the platonic affection of the baroness. Classical ideas had little to do with the first conception. Metastasio's operas probably suggested the form of the drama, and the germ of the idea dated back to 1776, when he had been requested to write a cantata in memory of the death of the daughter of the composer Gluck, who was associated with this subject by the music he had composed for Racine's tragedy, "Iphigenie en Aulis" [1] two years before.

If in this play Greek and barbarian are brought together it is not yet with the symbolic purpose of the "Helena" in "Faust." Indeed the ethical position here is more artificially youthful, more strained than it would have been had the plan been less complete when the poet broke the "icy chains" that bound him to Weimar. "Iphigenie" is indeed a beautiful, bright picture of calm, pure womanhood; but she awakens dramatic interest almost solely by her effort and failure to lie with a straight face. She is too upright for the part she has undertaken to play, although in the drama it is her straightforwardness that finally frees her brother and reconciles Greek and barbarian.

But the play not only lacks action, its ethical ideals are unripe and unnatural. A comparison, from this standpoint, of Orestes, who for a very pardonable crime wastes his youth in self-torture and penitential labors imposed by an oracle, and who finds his repose

[1] Grimm, Vorlesungen über Goethe, ii. 28.

from the furies at last in dreams of the nether world and sentimental contemplation of his sister's virtues (Act iii. sc. 2, 3), with Faust, who, though ten times more guilty than Orestes, wastes no strength in vain regrets, but rises "on the stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things," — this contrast will show the gulf that separates the Goethe of Frau von Stein from the Goethe of Christiane Vulpius.

But while ethically "Iphigenie" thus represents the old position, in its form it represents the new. It had been composed in prose during 1779. Now, in 1787, it was put into the most exquisite verses, as the image of Frau von Stein yielded to the spirit of classic repose and beauty, — a spirit so foreign to his contemporaries at Weimar, or even at Rome, that Angelica Kaufmann was almost the only one who from the first apprehended its true value and literary place. It was fortunate that Goethe had won in Rome self-confidence and critical repose, for a temporary lack of appreciation for his work now became almost the rule. He was always in advance of his public and of his critics. But from this time he was always sure that he had in himself more than he could learn from them, and he had no literary misgivings. Still "Iphigenie" did not wholly satisfy him in his later years; and this is not surprising. It had, indeed, its natural place in his literary development; but it was essentially earlier work made over, and it could not be made over into harmony with the spirit that he had brought back with him from Italy.

This same discord is observable in a still greater degree in "Egmont," whose hero Hermann Grimm calls "the weak (*weichlich*) aristocratic twin-brother of Götz." It appeared at a time when, thanks to the latter play, the German public had learned to follow new stars. The work suffers from having been too long in the writing. It was conceived in Frankfort days. Had it been published then it would doubtless have been more at one with itself than it proved to be when new modes of thought were set to revive the old conceptions. It has not "Iphigenie's" classic grace of form to commend it. Thus it belongs fundamentally in its art as in its ethics to the time of its inception, so that its best characters, Egmont and Clärchen, appeal far more to the romantic instinct than to the reason. The historical Egmont, as Goethe said later, was not calculated to rouse enthusiasm, but his own creation is hardly more successful. His Egmont sacrifices himself for ideals of political freedom, in the spirit of Götz, but the populace are represented as more amenable to demagogy than to patriotism, and so appear unworthy of the sacrifice, which therefore fails to excite our sympathy.

"Tasso" has more unity of conception and execution than "Egmont," but it is almost wholly lacking in dramatic action, and would hardly be tolerated in the theatre by a less patient public than the German. It was first printed in 1790; but it was not put on the stage till 1808. Indeed, it is essentially not a drama, but a study of character in dramatic form, and as such it must be judged. In its pre-Italian

condition it embraced two acts in prose written in 1780 and 1781, composed, as he wrote to Frau von Stein, "while he was worshipping her." But it was not till his relation with her was severed at least by distance, that he carried the work further, and, as was usual with him, sought an objective stand-point for it. He gave a side of his experience literary form, though, as in "Werther," the culmination of the tragic situation was suggested by an act of his former friend Lenz under similar conditions. Ethically, then, "Tasso" was a product of unrest, of a time which he speaks of as "a terrible disease," when he was "caught in a snare." In that sense "Tasso" was "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh," while it was equally true that "he could hardly tell what idea he had tried to put in it," because when he conceived it he had not yet "come to clearness," to borrow an expression from his "Faust."

The chief value of "Tasso," as it took shape in Italy and during the two years that followed his return, is in its form. The situation had ceased to have any living interest or actuality for him, and his constructive imagination flagged. Form had, however, won for him an intrinsic interest, and he seems to have been bent on giving to the drama the highest development in this direction. Metrically the iambics of "Tasso" are the nearest approach to perfection in the language; indeed, their very perfection was felt by Schlegel to be a fault, their melodious, long-continued, wavy motion being, in spite of their elegance and perfect melody, unsuited to dramatic dialogue.

A noteworthy change in the ethics of the drama had been produced, however, by his Italian experience. In February, 1788, he writes to a friend, "I cannot let 'Tasso' end thus," which means[1] that Tasso must neither appear justified, as he had perhaps at first intended, nor wholly humiliated, as the result of his indiscreet affection for the princess. Neither solution will serve for the Goethe of 1788, and so the last scene shows Tasso to us "brought to clearness" by his forced separation from his hopeless love, saved morally by the rock on which the bark of his fortunes had been wrecked. Thus "Tasso" ends in the spirit of "Faust." It may be noted in passing that the relations of the Italian poet to the court of Ferrara gave Goethe a welcome opportunity for grateful praise of his own patron, Karl August.

These three dramas are all conceived in an earlier, and executed in a later spirit. The first homogeneous work of the new Goethe was the "Roman Elegies," which were begun soon after his return to Weimar. These, as has been already said, reflect a more frank and naïve realism in his view of the senses and their gratification than accorded with the views of Frau von Stein, or the current ascetic professions of German society, which indeed reached no further than theoretic counsels of perfection; and what was important for his whole future career, he proceeded to put the spirit of the "Roman Elegies" into action in his own life, with a calm indifference to social prejudices that must have seemed quite incomprehensible to

[1] Thomas: Goethe's "Tasso." Introd., p. 1 seq.

those court circles, "imperfectly monogamous" as they are said to have been, who thought of him as a parvenu.

When Goethe returned to Weimar, in 1788, he wished to found a home. He was almost forty, and he felt that such relations would foster the calm development of his rearroused genius. But he knew enough of the ladies of his own rank at Weimar to see that in them social conventions had killed freedom. It was not among these that he could find the fresh, sober, healthy common-sense he sought. Philistia should not triumph over him whom Rome had set free. Intellectual companionship he could not have found in Germany; it was sympathy and love he needed and desired, and his heart found the fulness of its satisfaction in Christiane Vulpius, a Weimar maiden of lower social sphere, whom he took to his home in the summer of 1788 and always regarded as his wife, though they were not formally married till 1806, under press of danger from the French conquest.

If we are to listen to Weimar gossip "Mamzell' Vulpius" was a sort of cook, and somewhat addicted to drink. Goethe had been able to silence the opposition of his political opponents at court, but slanderous tongues of envious women were not so easily put to shame. Indeed his true relations to Christiane could hardly be justly apprehended before the publication of his correspondence with her, which even now is only partial. The original letters are contained in a series of portfolios labelled "Letters from

me to my wife," and at the beginning is placed that exquisite poem, —

> "Ich gieng im Walde,
> So für mich hin,"

called in his works "Found," but here "Frau von Goethe." The letters already printed breathe the tenderest spirit. They know nothing of the base allegations of Weimar scandal-mongers. They show only that he loved her, and found in her the true and faithful help-meet of all his after life. "I live," he writes at this time, "and though centuries and centuries were granted to man, I would have to-morrow be as to-day." He calls her "dear angel," "dear heart," "my little one," with that touch of natural simplicity that makes the great thinker kin to the simple burgher girl; and again he tells a friend that "he had walked on the shore, looking for sea-shells; but in one of them he had found a pearl that he guarded close to his heart." The "Roman Elegies" are his epithalamium to his bride, the most antique of modern poetry, quite in the spirit, as he himself says, of Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus, whom perhaps they surpass. Other poems among the most beautiful of Goethe's work are written of his love for her and of his grief at her death (1816), after their wedded life of nearly thirty years. From the first, his mother, who knew him best and loved him unselfishly, welcomed her as "her daughter," and in the dark days that followed Jena she proved worthy of her husband, and at the risk of her own life preserved him and his house from plunderers.

While it is greatly to be regretted, for his sake and for the sake of his good name, that Goethe did not take immediately the step that he took finally, that he did not by a public marriage conform to a social law, whatever might have been his views of his moral obligations, yet it should be remembered that the prevailing standard of his time was lax in this particular, and that it probably never entered his mind that he was wronging Christiane's moral nature or his own. For these social ethics Goethe cannot be made wholly responsible; but of the act that sprang from them, what more need be said than that since he never repented of his choice, there is no reason that his biographers should do it for him?

One of the results of Goethe's attachment for Christiane was to make clear to him the essential unhealthiness of his relation to Frau von Stein; and it is not difficult to trace in his letters to her the widening of the breach, until in 1789 (June 1st), he reads her quite a lecture on what now seems to him her officious meddling in his affairs, and their correspondence ceases till she is ready to resume it on the new footing. No doubt the breaking of a relation so prolonged, so intimate, and once so fruitful, caused him much regret and also a temporary loss of social popularity in Weimar; but he had outgrown both her and the Weimar circle, and could stand unmoved without them. He was now to suffer also a partial eclipse of his literary pre-eminence in popular favor, for he who had led his countrymen in "Götz" and "Werther" had passed beyond them. He could feel but little

sympathy for the spirits he had conjured up to riot in such chivalrous romances as Vulpius's "Rinaldo Rinaldini" and plays like Schiller's "Räuber," and they could feel still less for his deepened æsthetic insight. So, now that he was relieved from pressing cares of state by the generosity of Karl August, he turned more and more to scientific studies, which were to occupy so large a part in the next forty years of his life that, though such studies have no direct connection with literature, it is not unfitting to indicate here, with all brevity, what Goethe did for modern science, — a field in which few but specialists rightly estimate his services.

It was in 1784 that Goethe discovered in the human skeleton the undeveloped intermaxillary bone, which in lower animals is more easily distinguishable from the two bones of the upper jaw. The discovery was valuable in itself, but the method of investigation that he employed inaugurated the science of Comparative Anatomy. So, too, his essay on the Morphology of Plants, which traced all parts of the flower to modifications of the leaf, made him in botany as well as in zoölogy, "the tender father" of a new-born science.[1] He made experiments of much value in optics, also, though his theory of colors derived from them was fundamentally false. He was, too, the first to perceive clearly the vertebrate character of the human skull, — a view now generally accepted, though with some modifications. In short,

[1] The epithet is from Von Esenbeck, the noted botanist, cited in Lewes' "Life of Goethe."

as Helmholz has said, in science Goethe's great mind found a field adapted to it at a time that was peculiarly favorable, for material enough had been gathered both in botany and comparative anatomy to allow a clear survey of these subjects to be taken; and while his contemporaries were all wandering without a compass or contenting themselves with a dry registration of facts, the poet was able to introduce into science two ideas of infinite fruitfulness.[1] However this scientific activity may lie outside the field of literature, it belongs to Goethe's greatness as an original thinker; for he brought to these studies also the clear vision of the seer that had won him literary supremacy. German scientists have long ungrudgingly recognized their debt to their greatest poet.

The literary productivity, that after the completion of "Tasso" had given place for a time to these scientific avocations, was rearroused in Goethe at last by the long delayed friendship between him and Schiller. Their acquaintance, which for some years had given small promise of blossom, opened suddenly when its time was ripe into a perfect flower. The younger poet had been living in or near Weimar since 1787. Of his earlier life and work this is not the occasion to speak. It is sufficient for the present purpose to say that it had not been of a character to arouse literary confidence in a man of Goethe's wide relations and new Italian experience. Schiller was to be the nearest and dearest of Goethe's friends. In him and

[1] Lewes, Goethe, p. 348, cites Helmholz more fully and literally.

in his wife Christiane, Goethe found sympathy and appreciation for every side of his nature, such as is seldom vouchsafed to the great men of the world. But in 1788 it seemed to Goethe that Schiller stood in the way of the development of classical taste in Germany. Therefore he made no effort to meet the young poet, for Schiller was then but twenty-nine, and when at last a "chance" that Schiller had carefully calculated, brought them together, he could rouse no response in the elder man. Perhaps Goethe's relations with the court may have contributed somewhat to a cold bearing that hurt Schiller's pride, so that for a time his admiration for Goethe was tempered by what seems like jealous carping. It was in this mood that he wrote a review of "Egmont" that provoked Goethe to the rash remark that Schiller "might be right about the political wisdom now ruling in Germany, but as for its poetry he understood nothing at all about it." And yet Goethe was quite willing magnanimously to overlook the alienation of Schiller; he saw his worth and obtained for him a professorship at Jena, foreseeing, perhaps, that this would do much to clarify his æsthetic ideas; but he still ignored him personally, and Schiller felt this bitterly. For even in 1789 he had more in common with Goethe than had any other man in Germany. In the five years that followed, while Goethe sat in solitary grandeur, Schiller was ever drawing nearer to him. It was a strange irony that kept them so long asunder.

Goethe's life during these years was, however, full

of domestic joys and rich experience. On Christmas Day, 1789, Christiane bore him his first son, and he reorganized his household as befitted her added dignity of motherhood. This and the distant thunder of the French Revolution led him to defer a second visit to Italy, but he went to Venice in 1790 to meet the Duchess Amalie there. The literary precipitate of this journey, the "Venetian Epigrams," is peculiarly interesting, because it shows that his marriage had helped him to a calmer judgment of Italian culture than had characterized the "Roman Elegies." In general the content of his domestic life fostered a lighter vein, and he had begun to turn his attention once more to "Wilhelm Meister" and to the Court Theatre, when the summer of 1792 saw the duchy of Weimar involved in the disastrous invasion of France that culminated in the defeat of the Duke of Brunswick at Valmy. Karl August commanded a regiment of the invaders, and had summoned Goethe to join him at Longwy in September. He remained about six weeks with the troops, and was an eye-witness of the bungling incompetence that cost Germany 30,000 men. Goethe's impressions are recorded in his "Campaign in France," a most interesting account of war as seen with every advantage by one who has no pronounced sympathies with either cause; for Goethe, though he "preferred injustice to disorder," as he said later at the siege of Mayence (1793), had never identified "country" with "prince" or "form of government," nor suffered his patriotism to cloud the serenity of his judgment.

When Goethe returned to Weimar it was to find the house now inseparably connected with his name nearly ready for occupancy. It was a gift from the duke, and was palatial according to the standard of Weimar, though the rooms intended for the private use of himself and family were furnished with the most austere simplicity, as any who visit them to-day may see, for they are in the same condition now as when Goethe died. Full of the happiness of this new home, his work reflected what he felt in the healthy humor of "Reineke Fuchs," which he "took about with him," as he was accustomed to say, during 1793, and published in 1794.

"Reineke Fuchs" had been a popular form of animal fable turned to the purposes of satire since the tenth century. The kernel of it is in Æsop and can indeed be traced to India. The principal figure is the Fox, whose cunning enables him to use the power of the Lion to avenge himself on the brute force of the Wolf. By endless trickery he involves his enemies in the snares they have laid for him, and comes at last to an honorable old age. In Germany the fable appears in Latin about 940, but it received its best mediæval treatment about 1250 from a Flemish poet, Willem, whose work forms the basis of all future versions of the story, as it does of Goethe's delightful comic epic. Without local or personal allusions, he has made the whole a social and political satire of great vigor, ease, and humor, so that though it is not one of his deepest works, and was strangely neglected at the time of its appearance,

this humorous apotheosis of impudence has become, and is likely to remain, one of Goethe's most popular poems. Quotations from it and allusions to its situations are more universally recognized in Germany than would be the case with anything he wrote if we except "Hermann und Dorothea" and the Gretchen episode in "Faust."

And now, in 1794, Goethe and Schiller were at last to meet and understand one another. Schiller's long-cherished ambition was to be realized. He was to make Goethe feel that he, and he alone, could comprehend him. And when once this slow work was done, Goethe was first to speak of friendship, first to enter the house of his new-found intellectual brother. But as soon as he had learned to know him he felt he could not spare him from his life. His visits to Jena became more frequent and more prolonged. Schiller, too, made frequent visits to Weimar, and at last, in 1799, it was made possible for him to exchange his professorship at Jena for a house close to that of Goethe in Weimar, and their intercourse became unbroken till Schiller's early death.

The effect of this friendship was great on both men, though the lesser naturally gained from it more than the greater, and the realist had less need of an outside influence than the idealist. Both were one, however, in their belief in culture and art as potent influences for the elevation of humanity. In this spirit for three years (1795–1797) they made Schiller's periodical, "Die Horen," a means of impressing their common purpose on Germany at a time of intense

political and social fermentation. In it were published, together with many shorter pieces, the "Roman Elegies" and the concluding portion of "Wilhelm Meister." But Schiller's ideal enthusiasm aimed too high. He was obliged to abandon the journal; but they continued to attack the armies of Philistia through the "Musenalmanach" in stinging "Xenien," which scourged the aberrations of popular taste with the keenness of Martial's epigrams, and spread consternation in the ranks of their old friends of the "storm and stress," for though far less severe than the "Dunciad" or the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," these blows fell on writers less accustomed than the English to slashing criticism. They aroused indescribable excitement and life-long enmities.

In his serene old age Goethe remembered with regret these joint productions. "What time I have wasted with Schiller on the 'Horen' and the 'Musenalmanach,'" he said to Eckermann (Dec. 3, 1824). "I cannot look back without dissatisfaction on those undertakings in which the world misused us, while the work was quite without result for ourselves." He did not realize then that he had needed Schiller at all, and indeed it was less that Schiller gave him anything than that he roused his latent creative power. Through him Goethe learned, as he said, "to command poetry," as appears especially in the new lyrics and ballads, and to place himself above moods, so that he now worked more as a conscious artist in metres, which does not seem to have been always,

nor wholly, to his advantage. There were moments when in daily æsthetic intercourse with Schiller he seemed in danger of losing his realistic footing. But however we estimate its effect, Schiller's friendship was a great happiness to him, and it is interesting to hear this brother poet, who knew Goethe better than any other man, say that "he never for one moment doubted his character." "There is," so he writes, in 1800, to Countess Schimmelmann, "a high sincerity and sterling worth in his nature, and the loftiest zeal for the right and good." Nor could the great aversion of Schiller's romantic wife for Christiane avail to trouble the course of the friendship of the husbands.

The first important work of Goethe that grew under this new influence to ripeness was "Wilhelm Meister." Of this novel Schiller had a very exalted estimate, though it would seem to be the general opinion that the book suffered artistically from the alterations made at his suggestion. "I count it one of the most fortunate incidents of my life," he wrote, "that I have lived to see this work completed; that it has been finished while my faculties are yet capable of impressions, so that I can still draw from the pure spring. I cannot tell you how deeply the truth, the inner vitality, the simple fulness, of this book has affected me. Tranquil and deep, clear and yet, like nature, incomprehensible is this work where all, even the most trifling things, show the clearness and balance of the mind whence they flowed."

"Wilhelm Meister" has no definite plot, but is rather the unfolding of characters from various

spheres of life, some of them quite classical in their delicate delineation. The "apprentice years" of William, in whom one recognizes again one of the many facets of Goethe's character, lead him among actors, through whose art he hopes to gain and give culture; then, as this does not satisfy, the aristocratic world opens its doors to him, and we have several figures that suggest the court of Weimar. The "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul" introduce the religious element, which Goethe had studied in the society of Fräulein von Klettenberg, in early Frankfort days; but it should be noticed that this is allowed to have no direct bearing on the action and life of the actors in the novel itself, for it is in practical activity that William's apprenticeship ends.

The book was hurried toward the close, and has not artistic completeness. But the individual characters are wonderfully realistic studies, in which the noble and the base, good and evil, the gay, fascinating, and more than coquettish Philine, the mysterious angel purity of Mignon, and the brooding monomania of the Harper, are treated with equal care and equal objectivity. Nor is any minor character, whether among the actors or the aristocracy, neglected. Incidentally "Wilhelm Meister" contains much ripened worldly wisdom and philosophy. It has also at least one famous piece of literary and æsthetic criticism, the analysis of Hamlet, while Mignon's songs are among the most exquisite of any literature. The book has sometimes been called immoral, possibly because it was impossible to deny its truth to hu-

man nature, so that when the mirror was held up to them, people turned away and cried shame at their own portraits. "Let the galled jade wince."

The ballads of this period are somewhat more artificial than those that preceded the Roman journey, yet the German element gradually reasserts its place beside the antique. For while "Alexis and Dora," "Pausanias," and "The Bride of Corinth" are essentially in the category of the "Roman Elegies," the classic hexameters, with their objective dignity and calm harmony, are turned, in "Hermann and Dorothea," to a subject instinct with national life, an epic of the German home, a monument to those conservative social relations which had been the strength of German nationality since Tacitus' day, and whose full significance his marriage had revealed to the poet.

The story of Dorothea is old in almost every detail,[1] but Goethe has given it eternal youth, though he has made it contemporary with the trials of the French Revolution, and the year of its composition (1796–1797). The scene is laid on the borderland in the Rhine country. The advancing tide of revolution has driven emigrants from the West into the still peaceful districts that had as yet heard only distant echoes of the "rights of man." Thus beneath an apparently simple story we have the contrast of two great impulses of human nature, the migratory desire of change, the restless, reforming, iconoclastic spirit, and the slow, conservative, accretive mind that feels

[1] Hewitt, "Hermann und Dorothea," gives the original text of the year 1732. There is a translation of it in Thomas's edition.

an instinctive dread of change, as though it were like a tree that cannot be transplanted without losing some increment of growth. The best fruit of each of these social conditions Goethe will unite in the marriage of his Hermann and his Dorothea.

Critics have called "Hermann and Dorothea" a "Hymn to the Family," "a masterpiece of studied realism," "the pearl of Germany's art." As in "Wilhelm Meister," there is no idealization. Even the minor characters are studied from life. The host and hostess of the Golden Lion suggest Goethe's own parents, and much in Hermann came from introspective study. There is none of the sentimentality of "Werther," nor yet of the idealized type, as in "Iphigenie." Dorothea's energetic independence in disaster is the natural result in a noble mind of those ideas of social freedom that caused the disasters themselves. What produced the Revolution produced the mind to endure it. Such use of types as this is quite distinct from the use made in those earlier works. And there is change also in his social ethics. Goethe's sympathy is now with a conservative patriotism, where the wife arms the husband to defend the home that all may enjoy peace. This accorded entirely with the popular spirit. "Hermann and Dorothea" won immediate and immense success, that endures undiminished to this day.

The next important work undertaken by Goethe was the furthering of "Faust," but sickness and public cares checked its progress so that the first part was not printed till 1808, and the second not till after

his death (1832). An attempted continuation of the "Iliad," the "Achilleïs," and a strong realistic drama, "Die Natürliche Tochter," belong also to this period. Socially, Goethe seems to have been much isolated, at least up to 1802, when the sympathy shown for him in a serious illness perhaps induced him to lower a little the "wall," as he called it, that he had raised around himself. Hence the deaths of Gleim, Klopstock, and Herder, in 1803, would affect him but little; but the death of Schiller, in 1805, struck a blow that was the more deeply felt because there was none to take his place. And this shock was followed by the battle of Jena, which threatened the annihilation of the Duchy and the destruction of the fruit of his public life, though happily these fears were not realized. Two years later, in 1808, his mother died also.

The French conquest was the cause of Goethe's formal marriage, and by a strange coincidence when their army occupied Weimar, it was the son of his old fiancée, Lili, who brought him a note of protection from violence that Christiane had gallantly risked her own safety to avert. Karl August's position seemed for the moment imperilled, for Napoleon was angry that he had assisted wounded Prussian officers. Goethe defended the duke to the French commander warmly and at some risk, for though usually a calm spectator of events, he was now greatly agitated and excited. In his exasperation, Falk reports that he said to him: "I tell you the duke ought to act and must act as he does; . . . though he should lose country and subjects, crown and sceptre, he must not deviate

one hair's breadth." If the duke were driven from Weimar, Goethe said he would follow him and sing his wrongs all over Germany, "and the children shall learn the song of their shame till they are men, and then they shall sing my master on to his throne again and yours off his." It was rare that Goethe allowed himself to show so much interest in politics; but it will be observed that it is the moral aspect, and not the political, that claims his sympathy.

In 1808, as the French hegemony was being apparently established at Erfurt, Goethe was brought into frequent contact with Napoleon, who had great admiration for his genius and no reason to complain of his politics. This, too, is the period of his most intimate intercourse with Bettina Brentano, whose inordinate vanity and a certain childishness of demonstrative affection finally made Goethe insist on suspending relations that had long been wearisome. She might be amusing and ardent, she certainly was enthusiastic, but her "Correspondence of Goethe with a Child" is little more than a romance in which she attributes to herself poems addressed to others, and after turning his verses into her letters, accuses the poet of using her letters for his verses. Bettina's admiration did not extend to Christiane, and, as one cannot be intimate with a lady who calls one's wife a "blood-pudding" in one's own house, his door was closed to Bettina after 1811.

Two years before this, Goethe had finished the "Elective Affinities," one of his keenest psychological studies, and in 1811 he had prepared the first

two volumes of an autobiography suggestively called "Fiction and Truth." He had begun work, too, on a continuation of "Wilhelm Meister," but till the Napoleonic period was over Germany was too agitated to have much thought for literature, and neither the autobiography nor the novel were appreciated as they have since come to be.

The "Elective Affinities" may be regarded as the literary precipitate of the long years of Goethe's relation to Frau von Stein, with whom he was now at peace again. It is a conflict of passion and duty, which here is brought to a tragic close. The book, like "Wilhelm Meister," has been called immoral. It is neither moral nor immoral; it is a dispassionate study of human nature, — a thing unfortunately incomprehensible to some of Philistia's most worthy citizens. In the two men of the book, Edward and the Captain, the attentive reader will recognize two sides of Goethe's own nature and experience: on the one hand, the sudden impulse of the imagination that led him to form such attachments as that for Frau von Stein; on the other, the calmer reason that always came to his aid at the critical points of his life, that prudence that had carried him away in time from Friederike, from Lotte, from Lili, and from Charlotte. So, too, in the women of the novel. Charlotte, as in real life, is cool, self-controlled; Ottilie is a creature of impulse, whose conscience is first awakened by the share she has in the accidental death of the child of Charlotte and Edward, her husband and Ottilie's "affinity," while the prudent Captain is the "affinity" of the

circumspect Charlotte. Their self-control saves these last from the tragedy that befalls the impulsive Ottilie and the weak-willed Edward. The purpose of the whole and its autobiographical meaning is clear. Goethe, while observing the outward commands of law, had allowed himself before his Italian journey to enter into ethical relations with Frau von Stein, which seemed impermissible to the riper view of moral law and social relations that came to him from his marriage and fatherhood. The purpose of the "Elective Affinities" is to show that every tampering with this foundation of society must be demoralizing, though the title shows that Goethe felt there was in passion an element of fatalism. This complexity has puzzled commentators, who forget that Goethe was not creating human hearts, but describing them.

The "Elective Affinities" is a book whose influence is much wider than the circle of its readers, for it is the starting-point of the psychological novel in Germany. It is now but little read, and that little chiefly because of the supposed connection of Ottilie with Minna Herzlieb, a young girl of Jena to whom the aged Goethe was attached, and who naturally reverenced him; but this is probably idle gossip. In any case Ottilie is a most charming tragic figure, a union of modest simplicity and clear knowledge, of humility and strength, and for her sake the book became for a time almost as popular as "Werther" had been, though the story as a whole was probably understood by but few in the sense in which Goethe had written

it and in which the generation that had passed would have received it.

Of "Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre" it may suffice to say that it is unintelligible to many, and dreary reading to most, in spite of some charming episodes and wise pedagogic observations. The fundamental teaching of the book is self-denying altruism, which was to find a happier expression in the Second Part of "Faust." A far higher place is due to "Dichtung und Wahrheit," one of the most fascinating autobiographies in German, or indeed in any language. The title shows that we have to do here, not with pure history, but with history seen through the long vista of years and under the transforming influence of the artist's eye. He tells the story of his life from childhood until he entered the court of Weimar (1749–1775); but his experiences are so modified and sometimes rearranged by his poetic fancy as to form a more artistically balanced whole than the unembellished annals might have furnished. Not that these changes were undertaken with any anxious wish to set himself or his acts in a better light before the world, but purely in the spirit of the artist, to whom his own figure was, like any other, a subject for artistic treatment. It has even been claimed that Friederike is here painted in fairer tints and the young Goethe in darker colors than the unvarnished tale would warrant. But whatever interest this and a few similar cases may have for the biographer, they concern but little the lover of literature, to whom "Dichtung und Wahrheit" will ever remain one of

the most charming of books and an imperishable monument to Friederike and to Lili, as the "Werther" is to Lotte Buff.

With brief intervals Goethe had been director of the Court Theatre since his return from Italy; but his love of art had made him a very dictatorial one, and the position must have brought him much annoyance. He had even been known to send recalcitrant actors to the guard-house, and to confine rebellious actresses with sentinels before their doors. But his lofty plans for the stage were impracticable, partly because Weimar could not support actors of the first class, partly because the public naturally wished to be amused rather than instructed for their money, and at last, after his labors of a generation, demanded the performance of a trained poodle. This was too much. Goethe's official connection with the Weimar stage ceased with 1817.

Before this, however, the Battle of Leipzig and the fall of Napoleon had taken a load from Germany, and this seemed to inspire Goethe with new poetic life; for it is now that he begins to collect poems, almost wholly newly written, into a volume of verses in the Oriental manner, which he called "Der West-Östliche Divan." As the idea took form in his mind, Goethe, though now nearly seventy, began an extended study of the Eastern poets, whose exuberance he checked by collateral reading of Homer. But in 1815 anxiety about his wife's health and his own interrupted his studies. He made a trip to the Rhine, where he renewed his youth in the society of Marianne Wille-

mer, to whom most of the poems of "Zuleika" in the "Divan" were addressed. The affection expressed was of course only gracefully platonic, for Marianne's husband was Goethe's host and congenial friend.

Though written mainly in 1814 and 1815, the "Divan" did not appear till 1819. Individual poems in it could not but be universally admired, though the general tendency was too broad, both in literature and politics, to please the Chauvinists of the period. It is true the book is essentially national. "The East infuses the West only as a rare perfume, without altering its nature," [1] and the mask of Oriental form is easily lifted; but when it is lifted it is only to show that, to Goethe, the narrow patriotism that would close its eyes to what is good in foreign nations, because they are foreign, is as hateful in a German as in a Frenchman, and as contemptible in literature as in social or political life. Still, the foreign form and the tendency to oracular mysteriousness in many portions has contributed up to the present day to narrow the circle of those who treasure "Der West-Östliche Divan."

In his arcadian holiday by the Rhine Goethe gained the strength and spirit to undertake also several studies in Rhenish antiquities. That these essays and the "Divan" should have occupied Goethe during the years of the War of Liberation and the great crisis of Waterloo has naturally offended the German patriots. The fate of Europe was changing before his eyes, and Goethe was imitating Hafiz. Hardly a note

[1] Scherer, Deutsche Litteraturgeschichte, p. 657.

suggests the great events of these momentous years, though they are involved in the "Divan," so far as suits the poet's purpose. Thus we are brought to consider Goethe's political position, not that we may apologize for it, but that we may understand it.

Goethe, like most men of his time, prized individual rather than social liberty. No doubt he felt, what Dr. Johnson said, that it made very little difference under what government he lived so that he could live and think in peace. He had no sympathy with extremists on either side, least of all with self-made rulers, the "political bunglers," whom, as he told Eckermann, "he hated like sin." Hence he was one of the few men who during the whole course of the French Revolution never had to change his mind or swallow his words. Later he suffered much from war, but he admired Napoleon with the affinity that men of great moral force feel for one another. He had faith in genius. He did not believe that Napoleon could be conquered, nor did he see any great gain to come to him, or to Germany, by that conquest. And so he sought relief in studies that might maintain the calm temper of his mind. He has been called unpatriotic; but, as has already been said, there was then no German nation, and Goethe probably saw small hope of its creation. In standing thus aloof from the temporal aspirations of the people, he believed he could labor more effectually for their intellectual upbuilding. That, he felt, was the first necessity. "Do not believe," he said about this time to Luden, "that I am indifferent to those great ideals,

Freedom, Fatherland, People; . . . Germany is dear to my heart. I have often felt it bitterly that the German people, individually so honorable, should be so miserable as a whole. To compare them with others gives me a pain that I try to escape as I can, and in art and science I find an escape. . . . But," he added, regretfully, "this is no compensation for the proud conviction that one belongs to a great, proud, honored and dreaded people."

Again he said to Eckermann: "How could I take up arms without hatred, and how could I hate without youth? . . . I have only composed love-songs when I loved. Could I write songs of hate without hating?" In the very last years of his life he recurred to the subject once more: "Whenever a poet wishes to work politically he must attach himself to a party. He must bid 'good-bye' to his unprejudiced view, and pull over his ears the cap of prejudice and blind hate. As man and citizen the poet will love his fatherland, but the fatherland of his poetic strength and his poetic activity is the good, noble, and beautiful, which is confined to no special province or land, which he seizes and forms where he finds it. . . . If a poet has been active all his life long, warring on injurious prejudices, putting aside narrow views, clarifying the public mind, purifying its taste, and ennobling its way of thinking and feeling,— what better can he do? How can he be more patriotic? . . . I know very well that all my striving in the eyes of some counts for nothing, because I have scorned to mingle in party strife. . . . But not a word more of this miser-

able subject, that I may not become foolish in my struggle against folly." (March, 1832). These words may explain why Goethe wrote no battle-cries or war-songs, but rather the graceful lyrics, foreign and yet German, of the "Divan," with their varying themes of mirth, gayety, sadness, and love, and the wisdom of old experience brooding over all.[1]

The "Divan" was the last work of Goethe's long married life. Christiane died in 1816. The blow was a terrible one to him, and yet he did not sink beneath it, though what remained to him of his old age seemed to him but time granted "that he might mourn her loss," as he beautifully said in lines written after her burial. It was the downhill of life. Men might not have looked for great things from the sixteen years that remained, but they were to yield much that could ill be spared, and they form a dignified and worthy close to his full and rich career.

He regarded these as his "testamentary years." To Germany he seemed like a survival of an heroic age. All minds looked reverently to Weimar. It was the goal of pilgrimage to men of most varied minds and nations. Thither came Lotte Kestner, now a widow of sixty (1816), with her daughter Clara, whose letters during her stay in Weimar

[1] Eckermann's Conversations contain a number of striking passages on politics. Especially noteworthy are those under the dates: February 25, 1824, July 9, 1827, April 7, 1829 (on Ireland), February 18, 1831, March 21, 1831, March, 1832 ("Einige Tage später"); and in the Supplementary Volume, January 4, 1824, and March 14, 1830. The passages cited above occur in March 14, 1830, and March, 1832.

amusingly betray her wounded vanity.[1] Here, too, came the young Heine, who was to carry the torch of lyric poetry, that he caught from Goethe's drooping hand, through the middle of the century. Princes and statesmen were among the visitors. And among them, too, was a boy afterward destined to a noble name in English letters, — William Makepeace Thackeray, then a student at Weimar. A letter, which he wrote years afterward to Goethe's biographer, Lewes, gives a picture of dignified old age that one would not willingly lose. He writes : —

"In 1831, though he had retired from the world, Goethe would, nevertheless, very kindly receive strangers. His daughter-in-law's tea-table was always spread for us. . . . My delight in those days was to make caricatures for children. . . . I was touched to find that they had been remembered, and very proud to be told, as a lad, that the great Goethe had looked at some of them. He remained in his private apartments, where only a very few privileged persons were admitted. . . . Of course I remember very well the perturbation of spirit with which as a lad of nineteen I received the long-expected intimation that the Herr Geheimrath would see me on such a morning. This notable audience took place in a little antechamber of his private apartments, covered all round with antique casts and bas-reliefs. He was habited in a long gray or drab redingot, with a white neck-cloth and a red ribbon in his button-hole. He kept his hands behind his back, just as in Rauch's

[1] See "Journal des Débats" (ed. Hebdom.), May 26, 1894.

statuette. His complexion was very bright, clear, and rosy; his eyes extraordinarily dark, piercing, and brilliant. I felt quite afraid before them. . . . I fancy Goethe must have been still more handsome as an old man than even in the days of his youth. His voice was very rich and sweet. . . . I can fancy nothing more serene, majestic, and healthy-looking than the grand old Goethe." And after a few words about the Weimar court, Thackeray concludes: "With a five-and-twenty years experience since those happy days of which I write, and an acquaintance with an immense variety of human kind, I think I have never seen a society more simple, charitable, courteous, gentlemanlike, than that of the dear little Saxon city where the good Schiller and the great Goethe lived and lie buried."

During these last years, as his health, now somewhat shaken, permitted, Goethe worked on the "Annals" of his life at Weimar, on the continuation of "Wilhelm Meister" and "Faust," and on a complete and final edition of his works for which he was paid the then unheard-of price of sixty thousand thalers in cash with the prospect of as much more should forty thousand copies be sold in twelve years. It was a great task, for forty volumes were required for the literary portion alone.

After his wife's death he travelled little, seldom further than Jena. He loved especially to revisit spots associated with his prime. "You hardly know what a remarkable place you sit in," he said one day to Eckermann at Jena; "it was here that Schiller lived.

In this arbor, on these seats, we have often sat at this old stone table and have exchanged many a good and great word. He was in the thirties then, I in the forties, both full of enthusiasm. That has all passed, and I am not what I was. But the old earth remains still, and air, and water, and land are still the same." The table is standing yet, and an inscription now reminds the visitor of these venerable associations.

In 1828 Karl August died. "Together till our last breath," had been his words, as Goethe greeted him three years before at the jubilee of his accession. And now the titan was left quite alone, reaching out into a generation that was no longer his. "I had thought to go before him," he said; "but God disposes as he sees best, and nothing remains for us poor mortals but to endure and stand erect as well as we can." Naturally in these last years his thoughts turned much to the problems of religion. Like Lessing, he called himself, and was, a thorough protestant; but it was not at all the Protestantism of Luther or of the Churches. He claimed the right to hold his being free from all prescribed dogmas, the right to develop his own religious nature. It was his belief that "we shall all gradually advance from a Christianity of words and faith to a Christianity of feeling and action." In this he was, like Lessing, under the dominance of the eighteenth century. Positive theology was foreign to him even in the solemn trials of these closing years.[1]

[1] Eckermann gives some striking conversations on this subject, e. g., March 11, 1832, February 28, 1831, September 1, 1829, February 4, 1829, March 2, 1824, February 25, 1824, January 4, 1824.

The death of Karl August left Goethe still a son to connect him with the past; but he, too, died suddenly in Rome, in 1830. He had been a wayward man and had given his parents much anxiety; but the loss was keenly felt by Goethe and by his widowed daughter-in-law, the loving companion of all these later years. There is something stoical and stately in the words with which Goethe, bowed under the weight of his eighty-one years, received the news that he was childless. "I was not ignorant that I had begotten a mortal," he said; but his eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

And now, as death drew near, his mind seemed to go back with passionate yearnings to old Frankfort days and Lili Schönemann, and he devoted himself with wonderful energy to this exquisite episode of "Dichtung und Wahrheit," for he felt that the lamp was flickering. "The individuality is still together, and in its senses," he wrote to Eckermann in this last year, and a little later, in a letter to Zelter, comes the startling cry: "Forward over the graves!" He worked on, comforted by the affectionate care of his son's widow, Ottilie, and granting himself little unnecessary repose. A year before his death he had bought his first arm-chair. But he told Eckermann he should use it but little. "All kinds of ease," he continued, "are quite foreign to my nature. You see no sofa in my room. I always sit in my old wooden chair, and it is only within the last few weeks that I have had a kind of rest put up for my head. Comfortable, pretty furniture around me paralyzes my

thoughts and brings me into an easy, passive condition." The stern simplicity of his study in the "Goethe House," at Weimar, still remains to attest his austerity in this regard.

At last, in August, 1831, the goal of his hopes, the Second Part of "Faust," was completed, and apparently for the first time in all those eighty-two years, he felt that his work was over. "The rest of my life may be regarded as a free gift," he said. "It is now really indifferent what I do, and whether I do anything at all."

As his last birthday drew near, he dreaded the festivity that would attend it in Weimar, and made the journey to Ilmenau, which he had last visited with Karl August eighteen years before. It was a natural choice, for Ilmenau was associated with the brightest days of his Weimar life, now more than half a century old. Near Ilmenau is a hill, the Kichelhahn, from whose wooded sides one of the loveliest views in all this region greets the wanderer. Here in the old days a little shelter had been built, and on its wall, in 1780, or as others say, in 1783, Goethe had written those exquisite lines: —

"O'er all the hill-tops
Is quiet now,
In all the tree-tops
Hearest thou
Hardly a breath,
The birds are asleep in the trees.
Wait: soon, like these,
Thou too shalt rest."

LONGFELLOW.

And now he climbed again to that old hut, guarded to-day as a precious memorial, and looked once more on the same beautiful scene. "Would that Karl August could have beheld this loveliness once more," he said. Then he read his lines, still legible after fifty years, and tears stole to his eyes. In a slow voice he repeated: "Wait: soon, like these, thou too shalt rest." Then, after a brief pause of recollection, he turned to his friend. "Now we will go down," he said. He died at Weimar a few days later, March 22, 1832, so peacefully that they did not know the moment of his departure.

The morning after his death Eckermann went to the room where the body had been placed. "Lying on his back, he reposed as if asleep. Deep peace and firmness reigned in the features of his lofty, noble, face. The mighty forehead seemed still to shelter thoughts. . . . The servant drew aside the sheet," which alone covered him, "and I marvelled at the god-like magnificence of those limbs. The breast was extraordinarily strong, broad, and arched. The arms and thighs were full and softly muscular, the feet shapely and of perfect form. Nowhere on the whole body was there any trace of fat or leanness or wasting away. A perfect man lay in great beauty before me." This body lies now with that of Schiller in the ducal mausoleum of Weimar, in front of the bronze coffins of his princely patrons, Luise and Karl August.

CHAPTER VI.

GOETHE'S "FAUST."[1]

GOETHE'S "Faust" is by the unanimous consent of German critics the greatest work of their literature, the most characteristic product of the German mind. And because of this very national quality it is perhaps more difficult of just appreciation than many less excellent works of less individualized art.

In any study of this drama it is necessary to bear in mind *how* and *from what* it came to be. In the early part of the sixteenth century we hear of a certain charlatan named Faust, who went about Germany swindling the credulous by fortune-telling, necromancy, and wonders of healing. He must have made a deep popular impression, for after a violent death, in 1540, he became almost immediately the nucleus around which gathered a great number of diabolical tales, which seemed to spring naturally from the gloomy fancy of this first century of German Protestantism, and in 1587, these legends were collected into a "Historia von D. Johann Faustus," written by an anonymous but zealous and mortally serious Lutheran.

[1] This chapter has appeared in "The Sewanee Review" for August, 1894.

This legend, consciously or unconsciously, makes Faust the counterpart, as he was the contemporary, of Luther.[1] Son of a peasant, he achieves great distinction at the University of Wittenberg, but falling into what the legend calls "a foolish and arrogant mind," he seeks by magic to deepen his knowledge of nature. A devil, Mephostophiles, becomes his servant for twenty-four years, after which Faust is to belong to the Evil One, and the treaty is signed with his blood. At first the devil amuses Faust and his professorial famulus, Wagner, with high living, then with sexual pleasures, then he whets his curiosity in regard to the unseen world. This tending to rouse remorse, Faust takes to mathematics for consolation, and after a time visits hell and the stars. Then he makes wide travels on earth, playing various magical pranks, in the course of which he shares in wild student revelry and conjures up the Grecian Helen, whom he take as concubine, and has by her a sooth-saying child. When the twenty-four years are passed, the devil carries away Faust, who ruefully points out the moral of his folly.

The point of this moral in the original Faust legend is directed against those humanists who were no more content with the obscurantism of Luther than they had been with that of Rome. In the reformed as in the unreformed Church a man must not seek to know beyond what is written, and above all he must eschew Helena and Greek ideals of life. Both the Luther of history and the Faust of the legend lecture on ancient

[1] Cp. Scherer, Faust-Buch, xxi.

culture; but Faust yields to it and Helena, while Luther marries after the Christian ordinance; Luther clings to the Bible, Faust wishes to search beyond and behind it; Luther fights with the devil, Faust compacts with him. Both visit Rome, where Luther is shocked, but Faust is amused and cynical. In short, this "Historia" is orthodoxy brandishing its theological birch at the freedom of human inquiry.

This remains essentially the characteristic of all prose versions of the Faust legend, for of these there were several in the next century. Some, to be sure, endeavor to connect him with the idolatry they attributed to Rome, and some introduce the episode of Helena by an abortive attempt of Faust to seduce a servant girl, a *motif* afterward used by Goethe. Meantime, however, the "Historia" had been translated into English and dramatized by Christopher Marlowe (1589), with no essential change in plot or theology. After Marlowe's death (1603) a good deal of *diablerie* was added to his serious tragedy in order to tickle the ears of the groundlings. In this shape English actors brought the story back to Germany, where it attained much popularity as a spectacular drama, in which the clown, representing the shrewd philistine common-sense of the middle class, plays the chief part, counterfeiting and parodying Faust and almost masking the original serious purport of the piece. But a still lower fall, and greater vulgarization, awaited the legend. It became a puppet play, a sort of "Punch and Judy Show," to amuse children, and as such it was seen by the boy Goethe.

Meanwhile, however, Lessing, with critical insight, had perceived the great possibilities of a subject that involved the deepest problems of man's moral existence. "Dr. Faust," he wrote in 1759, "has a number of scenes in it that only a genius akin to Shakspere could have conceived." He even began, himself, a drama on the subject, though of this Goethe was probably ignorant. But what appealed to Lessing appealed equally, and perhaps more forcibly, to Goethe, for there were many things in the young man's career that might make him feel allied to the Faust whom he discerned behind the tinsel of the puppet-play. If Faust had explored all the branches of knowledge and found satisfaction in none, Goethe in his Leipzig years had been disappointed in his legal and metaphysical studies, of which latter "he thought he knew about as much as the teacher himself." Nor was he better satisfied with his critical instructors. "What I wanted," he writes, "was a standard of judgment, and that no one seemed to possess." Then in Frankfort he had had a touch of speculative theology through Fräulein von Klettenberg, and with it had been mixed a certain amount of pietistic alchemy and spirit-lore, which might fascinate but could not satisfy; and to all these we must add the powerful solvent of Rousseau's social philosophy. That he found in his personal student experience suggestions of Faust was not remarkable. He had a cynical friend, Behrisch, who, to judge from a letter, seems to have counselled him to play Faust's part toward a Leipzig Gretchen; but the subject was

more probably brought home to him by a sympathetic study of Paracelsus, the sixteenth century physician, in whom Goethe found the connecting link between Faust and himself.

Now the moment Goethe saw Faust in himself, the necessity of giving this subject literary expression became imperative to him. "Faust," as he would treat the subject, would contain his views of man, of destiny, of ethics, and of the spiritual world. It would be his testament to mankind. But there was a vast scope of intellectual and moral development that separated the young man who went to Strasburg in 1770, hiding his cherished scheme from the critical and captious Herder, from the venerable octogenarian who at eighty-two sealed the manuscript of the concluding part of what had been truly the work of his life, and wrote of it to Reinhard: "Await no finality. The last-solved problem of the history of the world and of mankind discloses immediately a new one to be solved." Incompleteness lay in the nature of the task, nor can we expect to find either in matter or form a unity of composition or plan. Much is unexplained, more is left without a clearly obvious purpose, and the sequence of some scenes offers insuperable chronological difficulties. As Scherer has said: "The whole plan is not carried out. Important scenes, which Goethe had proposed, are wanting. Inequalities were not avoided. It is only when looked at in general and from a distance that the poem has unity, somewhat as the Homeric epics, or the 'Nibelungenlied,' or the 'Gudrun.' Just as

the work of various hands in the broad popular epics produced only a partly unified whole, or hid and swelled the original whole, so here, this work of sixty years, long continued, interrupted, and subject to the most various moods, could not attain a true inner uniformity and completeness. While in the great mass of the First Part we admire the sure, bold hand of the young or mature artist, the Second offers, beside astonishingly successful portions, weaker parts, also, in which the hand of the aged master seems to tremble."

Goethe was entirely conscious of this. He calls it, in writing to Schiller, his "tragelaph," or goat-stag, a fantastic creature, and again he speaks of it as a "rhapsodical drama." In 1797 he found some of the early prose scenes "quite intolerable in their naturalness," and proposed to put them into rhyme, which he did in every case but one.

In its general outlines the genesis of the work seems to have been somewhat this.[1] The first idea of the drama, he tells us, came to him in 1769. It is not probable that he began writing on it till 1773, though some prose scenes may date back to the preceding year. It was then known among his friends that he was engaged on the work, and they evidently expected something to out-herod "Götz" in dramatic heresy of storm and stress.[2] It continued to be his

[1] Thomas, "Goethe's Faust," vol. i., Introduction, gives a condensed statement of the present state of criticism on the First Part of Faust.

[2] "Schick' mir dafür den Dr. Faust, Sobald dein Kopf ihn ausgebraust," writes Gotter to Goethe, in July, 1773.

favorite theme till he went to Weimar in 1775. But he worked on isolated scenes only, and probably had not thought out their connection. This seems the more likely as we study the character of a copy made from Goethe's manuscript soon after he went to Weimar by a lady of the court, Luise von Göchhausen, which was discovered in 1887, and has since been published by the distinguished Goethe scholar, Erich Schmid.

We have here twenty scenes of mingled prose and verse giving the episode of Gretchen substantially as we now find it, but with a fragmentary introduction, from which still unfinished scenes were probably withheld, for it does not seem that Goethe added materially to "Faust" between his coming to Weimar, in 1775, and the eve of his return from Italy, in 1788, when, in writing to Karl August from Rome, he announces that he "has made the plan of Faust," having "rediscovered the thread" and written a new scene, the "Witches' Kitchen," as an attempt to bridge that chasm between the early portions and the Gretchen episode which existed in the Göchhausen stage of the drama. But, as Thomas observes, "Goethe will find that the old thread is worthless and that he must discover a new one." This seems to have dampened his ardor once more. Little was done in 1789, and only the promise of "Faust" for a complete edition of his works led him to publish it as "A Fragment" in 1790, from which no doubt he still kept back unfinished scenes.

The date will explain why the Fragment attracted

comparatively little attention. All eyes were turned to France in this second year of the Revolution. Schiller, however, saw in it the "torso of a Hercules," and repeatedly urged Goethe to resume his work on it, though without response, until June, 1797, when the elder poet writes: "Our ballad study has led me again to this misty, cloudy path," so that he is prepared to console himself for his disappointment in regard to a proposed Italian journey, in that "world of symbol, idea, and fog." To this end he tells Schiller that he has planned to finish up what is already begun, and "fit it to what has been printed." He proposes, he says, "to take things easily in this barbarous composition, striving to touch, rather than to satisfy the highest demands. The whole," he is convinced, "will always remain a fragment," for Goethe was now in his most classical period, and more distant from the essentially Teutonic conception of the then existing scenes than he became after Schiller's death.

It is therefore no wonder that "Faust" progressed slowly, and that the poet turned from ordering the earlier portions to working on the hint of the old legend that connected Faust with Helena, or, as it would immediately present itself to Goethe's mind, the Teutonic with the Hellenic spirit. But, as appears from the Correspondence of 1800, he had reserved the development of this idea for a second part. It was not till 1808 that the First Part appeared in its present form, final, but still incomplete and incongruous. This incongruity will best

appear if we follow the course of its twenty-five scenes.

The poem opens with a prelude in which a poet, a manager, and a Merry-Andrew exchange their views on the conditions of the German stage and of theatrical success. We have then a prologue in Heaven, where God and the Devil are introduced with the naïveté of Hans Sachs. In this prologue we are told, on the very highest authority, that Faust is God's servant. His service is indeed momentarily "confused," but God will bring him in due time to "clearness." Still, since man is prone to err as long as he strives, God is willing that Mephistopheles should tempt him if he will. Thus the reader or auditor is assured at the very outset that Faust will be saved. Indeed, Goethe's Mephistopheles tells the attentive reader that he cares less to win Faust's soul than to prove that he is right in his materialistic and pessimistic view of life. The point of interest is therefore no longer what will become of Faust, but how this "clearness" is to come to him; and the action is thus raised wholly out of the sphere of Marlowe's tragedy of sin and damnation to a serener ethical plane. But the reader should not forget that this prologue was written after Goethe himself had come to greater clearness about his intentions than when most of the First Part was composed.

The play opens with Faust in his study. He is apparently an old man, though he has been professor but ten years. He has studied every profession, and is profoundly discouraged at the narrow scope of the

human mind. He even contemplates suicide; for magic, though it had enabled him to conjure the spirit world, had not given him power to comprehend or control it. The carols of Easter morning bring him back to a healthier frame of mind, and we next find him with his famulus, the narrowly contented scholar, Wagner, who, like Hanswurst in the earlier drama, is the philistine antitype of Faust, mingling with the people on a spring holiday, but escaping at length from what he knows to be their unmerited gratitude for his medical aid in the pestilence.

As they walk together, and Faust speaks of his longings, they are met by a black dog, whom Faust takes to his study, where, after some hocus-pocus, the dog reveals himself as the diabolical spirit Mephistopheles, for the moment dressed as a wandering scholar, who announces himself as "a part of that force which always wills the ill and always works the good," or again as "the spirit that denies," whose "element is what you call sin, destruction, evil," and that, because "all that exists is worthy of perishing." In so far, then, Mephistopheles is a sort of Nihilist. His attendant spirits lull Faust to sleep in exquisite dimeters and on his awaking he has become disposed to sign a compact by which, if the spirit can satisfy him, he may have him.

> "When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet,
> There let at once my record end.
> Canst thou with lying flattery rule me,
> Until self-pleased myself I see, —

Canst thou with rich enjoyment fool me,
Let that day be the last for me." [1]

But this, as appears from the prologue, means nothing more than that he will then be driven to admit that Mephistopheles' pessimism is justified. Faust signs the compact with his blood, and after Mephistopheles has given cynical advice to a young scholar on his choice of a profession, he begins his task by introducing his master to an orgy of student debauchery in Auerbach's wine cellar in Leipzig.

The scene that follows is vivid and, alas, not untrue to student nature, though the reader will sympathize with Faust in the disgust it aroused in him. He was not to be satisfied with such chaff. It lay in the natural sequence of things that the obsequious devil should now shift from gluttony to lust. But at this point Goethe found a personal experience to embody, and thus there was developed a drama within a drama that so outgrew its subordinate place as to seem to many the central point of the entire work, as it is of the First Part. It is the Gretchen episode that for a time absorbs the poet's entire interest.

It was essential for the drama that Faust should not wholly reject these untried attractions of sensual love. But in yielding he must carry our sympathy with him, since the prologue has told us, what indeed must from the first have been clear, in the very nature of the case and from the character of the

[1] The metrical citations of the First Part are from Taylor's translation.

author, that Faust is to be brought by his trials to "clearness" and not to moral ruin. This Goethe sought to accomplish by the "Witches' Kitchen," where a rejuvenating potion is given to Faust, which, as Mephistopheles tells the spectators aside, is a love potion also. Helena, the ideal of womanly beauty, is shown him in a glass and "with this drink in his veins, he shall soon see Helena in every woman." But, after all, this attempt to enlist our sympathy for Faust the seducer, with his rather childish "I must," was not, perhaps could hardly be, successful, and it was probably the consciousness of this that made Goethe speak so slightingly of the work at this stage in letters to Schiller. As for the Apes' mysterious talk in this scene of the "Witches' Kitchen," Goethe afterward spoke of it as "dramatic-humoristic nonsense," and barring the "humorous," we may take his word for it. It is wholly impertinent to the main action of the play.

With scene vii. and Gretchen we pass into a quite different atmosphere. Mephistopheles does little more than a cynical friend might do. The action is now no longer guided by the old play or puppet-show, but by Goethe's recollections of Leipzig and Sesenheim. It is the theme treated already in "Götz," in "Clavigo," in "Egmont," — the love of a girl of lower culture and station for a man socially and intellectually her superior, though morally, if not inferior, at least more complex. The whole episode, in its delineation of character, and in its tragic development, is a masterpiece hardly equalled, save by Shakspere,

in the range of literature. It is thoroughly popular, universally comprehensible, and thus it fixed itself immediately in the public mind as *the* Faust drama, while the higher unity of the whole was perceived only by the thoughtful few.

The episode, for such it is essentially, though artistically complete in itself, opens with the meeting of Faust and Gretchen as she leaves the church. With the boldness of a gallant adventurer he offers her his escort, which she refuses as a girl of the middle class might do, resolutely, but without indignation, and in a language that marks at the very outset her lack of culture. Here and throughout she is a girl of the people. She has the faults common to her class in Germany and elsewhere; she is inclined to sentimentality, fond of dress and ornament, but yet she is industrious, neat, and with the motherly instinct natural in a simple child of nature. Faust, thanks we must suppose rather to the witch's potion than to any peculiar elective affinity between his nature and hers, is fascinated by her and demands Mephistopheles' aid to win her. But his diabolical arts would fail here. "I have no power over souls so green," he says, contemptuously, while the facile Faust thinks: "had he but seven hours he could win her by his own persuasion," and would have no need of the devil. Mephistopheles is pledged to help him, but, save for certain buried treasures which he unearths, he resorts only to ordinary means of seduction. We have left for the moment mediæval witchcraft for modern naturalism.

The next scene (viii.) takes us to Gretchen's "small but neatly kept chamber," where, as she braids her hair, she muses, a little flattered by the attentions of a gallant who "would not have been so bold if he had not been of noble family." Presently she goes out, and Mephistopheles nurses Faust's passion by bringing him to this sanctuary of maidenhood, where each feels and speaks according to his nature, Faust as a lover, Mephistopheles as a cynical sensualist. They leave a casket of jewelry in her clothes-press. Gretchen returns and with the instinct of innocence notes the sultry air, and feels a dim foreboding. She finds the casket, and, without much questioning whence it came, she is carried away by the contents. She decks herself with the ornaments, and talks the while with a childlike pathos of the disadvantages of a poor girl in this worldly world.

> "To gold still tends,
> On gold depends,
> All, all! Alas! we poor."

The ground being thus prepared, the willing go-between is found in the shape of neighbor Martha, whose prudent flirtation with the cautious Mephistopheles forms a powerful foil to the ardent passion of Faust and the budding love of Gretchen. Tender feelings that might purify Faust's love are for the moment shipwrecked on the cynical promptings of his ally (xi.). In Martha's garden they meet, and Faust wins the promise of her love in two exquisite scenes (xii., xiii.), skilfully set off by the recurring

bits of dialogue between Martha and Mephistopheles, as each couple in turn is brought before the audience.

There follows a scene (xiv.) which in its present place involves a contradiction, when viewed in the light of the last scene of the Second Part. Originally it had been placed much later, and after Gretchen had long given all she had to give. In his youth and up to the period of his union with Schiller, Goethe was willing to let Faust's relation to Gretchen continue until broken by an unwelcome interruption. In old age he found symbolical use for Gretchen, and wished to make her appear as one

> "Who had forgot herself but once,
> Who dreamed not that she erred."

It then became necessary to cancel this scene or change its place, which leaves it, as is usual in such revisions, out of place. This scene is entitled "Forest and Cavern," and shows Faust in a gloomy mood. He has torn himself away from Gretchen, as the boy Goethe is said to have done from his first unhappy passion, and sought refuge in the bosom of nature. Now such moods are not apt to intervene between the promise and the fulfilment of love, and Mephistopheles in painting the longing of the deserted Gretchen has an easy victory, hardly requiring the consummate skill with which he presents his temptation. In its original place and with the original assumption of a prolonged relation, the scene would have had a far deeper note of moral tragedy.

After an exquisite song in which Gretchen expresses her love-longing (xv.), there follows a second scene in Martha's garden, where Gretchen naïvely questions Faust of his religious faith, and gets an answer which is the poetry of pantheism, and wholly outside the sphere of her intellect. It is interesting to see how clearly in a few speeches Goethe has placed the religious instinct in contrast to speculative theology, neither comprehending the other, the lower yielding to the higher, but not without moral loss. Gretchen instinctively shrinks from Mephistopheles; but for Faust she will give her mother a sleeping potion, a poison with which Mephistopheles has provided him, that they may love undisturbed; for in him whom she loves, the simple Gretchen can conceive no harm.

No long interval can intervene between the first and second "Garden" scenes (xii., xvi.), for the "Forest and Cavern" (xiv.) was apparently intended to represent no more than such an excursion as the boy Goethe was wont to make with his tutor in Frankfort, as he has told us in "Dichtung und Wahrheit." The first interview (xii.) had been in the time of the flowering daisies, perhaps in April, for it must have been after Easter and before May 1st, the Walpurgis-Night that is to follow.[1] But in the

[1] This cannot be the Walpurgis-Night of the next year, because Valentin is killed two days before the Walpurgis, and also before Gretchen's child is born; but, as will appear, a satisfactory chronology has become hopeless. How this came about is clearly stated by Thomas, l. c. 324.

scene that follows the second meeting, "At the Fountain" (xvii.), Gretchen has already fallen. Her prayer in the "Donjon" scene (xviii.) shows that she is conscious of approaching motherhood, and is already abandoned, and when her brother Valentin is introduced and killed by Faust, in scene xix., her condition has become common talk; yet this, as we learn from that very scene, was on the 29th of April.

Then, too, it will be noted that in no one of these scenes is the death of Gretchen's mother from the potion mentioned or assumed, or indeed reconcilable with what is said, though if, as is stated in the Second Part, Gretchen erred but once, this death must have already taken place, and it is, in fact, mentioned in the "Cathedral Scene" (xx.) that follows. All this has come, like the previous trouble with "Forest and Cavern" (xiv.), from the changed conception of Faust's connection with Gretchen, at first conceived as a lasting liaison in which the mother's death is to be caused by the growing recklessness of Gretchen's absorbing passion, but afterward regarded as a momentary aberration, as of a magnetic needle that turned immediately back to its celestial pole.

The scenes "At the Fountain" and "Donjon" (xvii., xviii.) show first how sin in Gretchen's gentle nature fills the heart with tender and pathetic sympathy for fellow-sinners, then the penitent turns in impassioned prayer to the sorrow-laden Virgin-Mother, her soul recovering its purity and gaining

infinite depth by its acquaintance with sorrow and pain. This scene, even though originally intended to allude to Gretchen's repentance for her mother's death, and afterward changed in its intention, might surely imply that Gretchen was abandoned. She speaks in the preceding scene (xvii.) of Faust in the past tense, and indeed it is difficult to conceive that such feelings as she utters there could coexist with their former relation. But yet in "Night" (xix.), the scene that follows these, Faust is disturbed at the thought of going to see his mistress (*Buhle*) without a gift, and Gretchen must surely be meant.

It was important to Mephistopheles' purpose, however, that Faust should not be present at the crisis that was now approaching in Gretchen's fate. Hence Valentin, her brother, was introduced, first that by publicly proclaiming her fault he might plunge her deeper into purifying shame; second, that by killing him and so depriving her of the only relative to whom she could look for help, Faust might intensify his guilt and the final catastrophe be justified; and, lastly, that in order to escape from the consequences of this murder, Faust might be compelled to leave the city and therefore to abandon Gretchen. "Night," then, belongs to an earlier plan than the two preceding scenes. And the conceptions were never satisfactorily reconciled. If Faust had already abandoned Gretchen, as those scenes presuppose, the Valentin episode would be unnecessary, and the "Cathedral Scene" which succeeds might appropriately follow Gretchen's prayer (xviii.). But the character of

Valentin has a vigor and clearness of conception that give it enduring life.

The "Cathedral Scene" (xx.) with its funeral sequence, *Dies Irae*, was originally headed "Obsequies of Gretchen's Mother." As the verses of the Judgment Hymn resound in the penitent's ear, an evil spirit whispers to Gretchen thoughts of despair, and she falls fainting in the passion of her purgation, at the thought that "the glorified turn their faces from her." This scene in its present position must fall in the autumn, though, if Gretchen "erred but once," and this single error was the occasion of her mother's death, it must have taken place in April, and such is the assumption of the scene that immediately follows.

For the tension of the tragedy, which has here become intense, is now broken by the witches' carnival on Walpurgis-Night (May 1st). One may justify the introduction of such a scene on ironical grounds, as Heine does in the case of Shakspere's clowns; but the scene is too long for this purpose, and wholly foreign matter dealing with the personal and literary controversies of the time has been wantonly intruded in "Oberon's Wedding." Nothing connects the traditional Faust with the Walpurgis Carnival, though he was brought by the legend to the Brocken, the peak of the Harz on which it took place. But this is purely indifferent. We are here transferred from the modern realism of the Gretchen episode to the mediæval atmosphere of the early scenes, and the Faust who meets us here, singing with will-o'-the-

wisps, dancing with witches, enjoying the wild rout and Rabelaisian wit, is not the Faust who loved Gretchen, nor he who killed Valentin. This, too, like the "Witches' Kitchen," was "dramatic-humorous nonsense," — we have Goethe's word for it, — and here the humor is not lacking, if one does not insist too anxiously on sense. Goethe wrote it in 1800, and as late as 1830 he still rejoiced in it. "Really," he said to Falk, "one ought to play the joke oftener in one's youth, and give 'em such bits (*Brocken*) as the Brocken."

An interruption in the course of the drama was justified, for fate was hurrying it to a close. We are brought back to the tragic mood by the scene named "Dreary Day." Some interval has elapsed; Faust, has not seen Gretchen again, and is now far away when startled by the news which comes to him, we know not whence,[1] that Gretchen has been a wretched outcast and is now an accused prisoner, or rather, as appears later, convicted of infanticide, and destined to execution. This is one of those prose scenes that Goethe, in 1798, had found "intolerable in comparison with the rest," and had not succeeded in versifying. It is strong, but the extravagance of the language smacks of "Storm and Stress." Faust insists on being taken to her cell that they may attempt her rescue, and on magic horses they urge their nightly flight, while beneath the gallows witches soar and sweep, bow and bend, scatter, devote, and doom.

[1] It had been proposed to reveal it to him on the Brocken, but the intention was not realized.

And so we are brought to the climax of Gretchen's prison cell. Her mind is shaken by grief and the misery of her lot. Her tragic madness suggests Ophelia's, and perhaps surpasses its model. Faust finds her lying on the straw, singing words of an old song, which she turns to apply to her dead child. She takes her lover for her jailer, and pleads pathetically with him. Now she asks for her child, now imagines hell beneath her prison. At last she recognizes Faust, and half incoherently recalls the course of their love. She clings to him with tenderest passion, but she will not fly, "it is so wretched to beg, and with a bad conscience beside." Suddenly she remembers that the child is drowned, and cries to Faust to haste to save it, for it still quivers; or she tells him how she will be buried with her mother and brother, a little aside, the baby on her right breast, alone, for she can no longer feel a perfect sympathy even with her lover.

"It seems as though you repelled me," she cries; "and yet 't is you, and you look so kind and good." This is noteworthy. She cannot unite herself with Faust again, because she has gone through a stage of spiritual development that separates her from him. When at the close of the Second Part, Gretchen is bidden to rise to higher regions, that if Faust dimly comprehend her he may follow, the clew is given to the reason why she has this feeling here. And thus every tragic element is combined to deepen Faust's agony. At last Mephistopheles warns him that day is dawning. Gretchen shrinks in terror from that

unspiritual spirit, and when Faust, a last time, urges her to fly, she commits herself rather to the judgment of God, her last breath a prayer, and the last quiver of life a shudder for her lover. "She is judged," says Mephistopheles. But Faust is not to be left in this error. A voice from above proclaims: "Is saved," and as her appealing voice, calling him, dies away, Mephistopheles, snatching Faust to his side, vanishes.

So closes the First Part, and with it the microcosmic portion of Faust's experience, which has come to take a larger place than its function in the general plan would make artistically justifiable. But rules of proportion, and indeed of formal criticism in general, cannot be applied to "Faust" as a whole. What has given the First Part its pre-eminent place in German literature, at least in the popular consciousness, is in part the gnomic wisdom of Mephistopheles, which takes up and embodies a view of the world and of life which all recognize and too many share; but, more even than that, it is the unique portrayal of guilty innocence and betrayed simplicity in the drama of Gretchen's fall and purgation through suffering.

The Second Part of "Faust," in bringing us to the greater world and its wider activities, follows more closely in its outline the old legend. Magic resumes its sway, and the whole becomes more spectacular and operatic. A thread of esoteric meaning, or rather, perhaps, many threads, can be traced through all, now plainly in sight, now masked almost completely from view; sometimes because they deal with a

state of feeling and political conditions that are no longer present to our minds, sometimes because various allegorical interpretations run for a time side by side and at last become inextricably involved, sometimes, too, because, as occasionally in the First Part, the poet with wanton irony mystifies his readers.

To follow out and interpret, as far as may be, the endless complications of these parabolical types and personifications is the duty of special commentators of whom there is no lack, for during the last twenty years and more, critical attention has been directed in an increasing measure to the "Faust" as a whole, to its ethical and philosophical, rather than to its literary and æsthetic content. Nor will this be thought unnatural when it is considered that the present generation of readers is losing that delicate sense of form that finds its best illustration in the Germans, Heine and Platen, and their French contemporaries, Gautier, Flaubert, and the Parnassians. Men care little to-day for art for art's sake. The true is in danger of being divorced from the beautiful, a danger indicated by the overshadowing position of Ibsen. It is precisely the age in which we should look for a revival of interest in "Faust" as a whole, as distinct from the artistically admirable episodes of Gretchen and Helena.

No analysis of the Second Part of "Faust" can bring out its manifold beauties, but it is necessary to recall the sequence, or rather succession, of scenes to justify any judgment of the drama as a work of art, in which all the parts, to be fitly joined together,

must be in due proportion to each other and to the whole.

The close of the tragedy of Gretchen should have left Faust crushed with guilty despair. The Second Part finds him "bedded on flowery turf, tired, restless, seeking sleep," while graceful little spirits, accompanied by Æolian harps, sing soothing strains. The purpose of their song is "to calm the fierce struggle of the heart, to remove the bitter glowing arrows of reproach, and purify his breast from the horror it has experienced." They will "bathe him in dew from Lethe's flood, and give him back to holy light." Thus Faust is prepared to enter on the new experiences of the Second Part, and at the same time it is made very clear that, to Goethe, action, not penitential brooding, is to be the means by which Faust is to overgrow the wounds of his soul's fault and be brought to "clearness." And so we are already prepared to find that, in submitting Gretchen to Faust, Mephistopheles has realized his own saying: he has "willed the ill and wrought the good." Faust is stronger, wiser, deeper, for having known Gretchen; but she is to him as the *neiges d'antan*, and he looks forward, not back, until at the very close, the circle of his life is joined, and the beginning meets the end. Such seems to be the ethical import of the introductory scene, darkened a little toward the close by interwoven allusions to Goethe's theory of colors. A considerable part of this prelude, as indeed of the whole Second Part, is operatic in character.

The spectator is now transported to the palace of

an emperor, who is here represented as a frivolous and incompetent ruler, perhaps that he may the more require the aid of Faust's magic arts, and the more freely grant him scope for future activity. But it is hard to win much interest for services that cost only the wave of a magician's wand, and serve only to atone for the results of incompetence. Hence the scenes at the imperial court, here and in the Fourth Act, are æsthetically the least pleasing.

We learn first that extravagance has brought want in all quarters of the empire. Then Mephistopheles, who has introduced himself as court-fool, offers to relieve the embarrassment by means of countless buried treasures, the property of the crown. But from the question how he is to recover them, the emperor turns gladly to a carnival which in the main is also of Mephistopheles' preparation. Commentators say that the buried treasure is undiscovered knowledge, but it is difficult to carry the allegory through in this sense.

In the course of the operatic revels a chariot appears bearing Faust as Plutus, god of material, and here at least of intellectual, wealth, driven by a youth who seems to allegorize the ideal use of these gifts, but who is also intended, as Goethe told Eckermann, to represent Faust's future son, Euphorion, though why this should be is not clear. Mephistopheles follows them as Avarice. Together they come to the throne of Pan, the Emperor, who in this allegorical capacity signs a treasury note, which when multiplied indefinitely gives a paper currency secured by yet

undiscovered riches. Perhaps this may stand for those metaphysical speculations based on the unknowable, in which many Germans were then rejoicing as in an intellectual fool's paradise. Besides this, however, there is a direct satire on the use and abuse of paper money itself, especially toward the close of the episode.

Pleased with his imaginary wealth, the emperor wishes to be amused. He demands that Helena and Paris, types of ideal manhood and womanhood, be conjured up before him. That is, wealth, material and intellectual, arouses the desire for culture, of which Greek culture is the universal type and model. But over this classic realm of the beautiful Mephistopheles, the demon of an ascetic and supernatural religion, has no power. He turns to Faust and bids him descend to the mothers who dwell in the nether world, the incomprehensible creators of the ideal. For Mephistopheles, though he cannot seek the ideal himself, can give Faust a key to guide him; and this key grows in his hand, burns bright, and gives new strength and courage, though when Faust vanishes with it Mephistopheles utters a sneering doubt whether he will ever return from his quest. The Key seems to be enthusiasm, by which alone the ideal is revealed, but which may become destructive unless he who holds it in his hand stand firm on reality.

A scene of strong satire on the petty German courts now intervenes to give space for Faust's search, but he returns at length with power to summon the Trojan Paris, on whom the courtiers comment, each

after his kind. Helena then appears. She does not attract Mephistopheles, for Greek beauty is not, like this demon of Northern fancy, the sensuous negation of mediæval asceticism, but is outside of it and incomprehensible to it. Nor can the courtiers comprehend her charm. But Faust's past life has attuned his mind to thrill responsive to this new vision of beauty. With overwhelmed longing he endeavors to grasp it, crying: "Whoe'er has seen her cannot bear her loss." But the Greek spirit is still too foreign for his Teutonic mind. She vanishes, and he lies fainting, to be borne away by Mephistopheles. The close of this first act, the "Key," the "Mothers," and "Helena," is all that is essential to the ethical thesis of "Faust."

The Second Act opens in Faust's study, where he still lies in a swoon, while the conversation of Mephistopheles with a famulus, with Wagner, now a famous professor and physicist, and with a sceptical bachelor, once the student whom Mephistopheles had counselled, brings before us the conceptions of metaphysics, æsthetics, and ideal culture that might be contending in Faust's mind; all not without pointed satire on the conceited self-assurance of Young Germany and the metaphysicians of 1820.

Wagner has made chemically an Homunculus, but since he cannot give his little man a body, he must stay sealed in the flask where he was created. This Homunculus is clearly the artificial conception of the ideal that comes not from the experience of life, but from study. It, too, as well as Faust, has Greek as-

pirations, and therefore it seeks to draw its parent to classic ground. Suddenly it escapes from Wagner's hand, hovers over the head of Faust and reveals the course of the sleeper's mind as his soul gradually accustoms itself to the Greek view of life and happiness, the view, it may be added, of Goethe's "Roman Elegies." But the Homunculus is a student's creation, and the classical life that he seeks is found in the shadowy visions of Pharsalia's Walpurgis-Night, whither he counsels that Faust be taken. Of this classical carnival Mephistopheles has heard nothing. "How should you?" says Homunculus. "You know romantic ghosts alone. A genuine ghost, that must be classic, too." Though Mephistopheles dreads the Greeks who "entice man's breast to bright sins, so that ours seem gloomy beside them," yet the temptation of Thessalian witches overcomes his repulsion, and they all follow the Homunculus, dependent, as Mephistopheles pregnantly observes, "on creatures we ourselves have made."

The classical Walpurgis-Night has little direct connection with the course of Faust's development. Seeking everywhere Helena, he is borne, as one insane, to Mantho for his cure; but she "loves the man who seeks the unattainable," and directs him to Persephoneia's realm. Of this journey, however, we hear no more, nor is it made clear by what means Helena is brought to the upper world. But, aside from this, the scene serves a useful purpose in bringing the reader or spectator to a classical frame of mind by the introduction of the various ideals of antiquity

that are here brought before him. Mephistopheles, counselled by the Sphinx and teased by the Lamiæ, feels first at home with the personified ugliness of the Phorkyades, while Homunculus, in his zeal to obtain incorporation, loses himself among the philosophers, to be dashed to pieces at last against Galatea's throne, who is herself that realized ideal of which he was the scholar's reflection. To follow out these allegorical threads in all their twisted windings would perhaps go beyond the poet's intention, for he has clearly laid them aside himself to weave into this scene an allegorized debate between Anaxagoras and Thales, the former representing those who held the volcanic origin of the earth and opposed the investigations of the "Neptunists," among whom Goethe, who speaks here under Thales' mask, reckoned himself a leader. And so important does this second allegory become in the mind of the poet that he allows the Classical Walpurgis-Night to close with an operatic scene on the Ægean Sea, where sirens, nereids, and tritons, with Nereus, Proteus, and Thales, sing the praises of the sea and the triumph of the sea-born Galatea, while we are left uncertain how or why Helena is brought to the upper world.

For the opening of the Third Act finds her with a chorus of captured Trojan women before Menelaus' palace in Sparta, anxiously veiling from her own eyes the memory of all that has intervened since Paris carried her away, as though, perhaps, this were a condition of her return from the underworld. She thinks herself just landed, sent before by Menelaus to

prepare a sacrifice. With her is Mephistopheles, disguised as Phorkyas, type of ugliness, a servile contrast to Helena's queenly beauty and bearing. Through Phorkyas she learns that she is the destined victim of Menelaus' jealous rage. This signifies that the political jealousy of Greece destroyed its culture and its art. Though willing to die calmly, Helena does not disdain the proffered protection of a settlement of Northmen in the hills just north of Sparta, "made some twenty years ago," a hint that tells us exactly what is meant; for if we count back twenty years from 1808, when this scene was completed, we have the date of Goethe's return to Germany from Rome (1788), with all the wonderful results of that journey for him and for the culture of his country. Faust, the leader of this bold and venturous band, is praised by Phorkyas as of a gentler nature than the Greeks, which seems an allusion to the Christian element in modern civilization; and his fortress-palace is made to typify Gothic art. To bring Helena to Faust's palace is to bring Greek ideals to Germany, while, of course, here as before, in the details there is much that may be explained in this way or in that, or more wisely, sometimes, in no way at all.

For such a man as Goethe, to know Greek art was to make it a part, an inseparable part, of his artistic being; and Greek art found in him a protector who yet preserved his German nature. And so in the drama Faust and Helena need for their union no long wooing, though in the brief play of its delicate fancies Faust teaches her the unwonted German

rhyme, into which the chorus falls a little later, after Faust has taken his bride to the peaceful retreat of Arcadia. Here a child is born to them, Euphorion. Goethe told Eckermann (December 20, 1829) that this child, who had appeared also in another form in the First Act, was the personification of poetry. But there is something in the manner of Goethe's announcement that suggests mystification, and it is very clear that, at the close of his brief career, Euphorion is but a thin mask for Lord Byron.

All of what is said by and of Euphorion seems consistent with no interpretation that has yet been suggested by the commentators, but still the essential elements of the episode embody a profound æsthetic truth. Euphorion is introduced as a naked genius, without wings, faunlike but not animal, springing higher and higher from the ground, while his mother cautions him that he may leap but not fly, and, like Antæus, will gain strength by touching earth. The German Faust at first is less disturbed than his Grecian spouse at these soaring leaps, but Euphorion's flight is ever wilder, more unrestrained, until at last he falls, like Icarus, dead at his parents' feet, and disappears in light, leaving behind his mantle and lyre, and calling on his mother to follow. The fire and throbbing energy of this scene are indescribable, and the threnody to Lord Byron with which the chorus bewails Euphorion's death is a sympathetic and discriminating tribute of exquisite beauty. Helena follows the summons of her son, and having embraced Faust, she vanishes, leaving her garment and veil in

his arms. They dissolve into clouds, lift Faust, and bear him away.

Here the essential allegory seems to be that a perfect and fruitful union between modern and classic life is impossible. It produces an idealism that destroys itself because it is not in touch with the actualities of our life. Therefore Euphorion perishes, and therefore Helena must return to the shades. But she leaves behind her all that we can take up into our modern life of the classic ideals, the garment, that is, "love of beauty," especially in artistic form. Hence Phorkyas, falling a moment from Mephistopheles' rôle, bids Faust: —

> "Hold fast to what remains to thee of all,
> The garment! Leave it not; for demons pluck
> Already at its skirts, and to the underworld
> Would drag it gladly. Cling the faster to it.
> . . . . . .
> Above all commonplace it lifts thee up
> Upon the air, long as thou canst endure."

It is, then, through the Greek view of life that Faust is to gain the foundation for his future experience, and this foundation is to be a practical idealism. The influence of Helena on Faust is that he no longer gazes in the stars while his feet are in the mire. He will from this time look more about him than above him. He will still strive, but his activity will be in this world and for his fellow-men.[1] It is not, then, merely æsthetic teaching that Helena has for

[1] Let him to whom this seems strange read what Goethe says to Eckermann on thoughts of immortality, Feb. 25, 1824.

Faust, but a profoundly ethical one, and one of sufficient importance to the drama to make the subordinate and introductory position of the First and Second Acts artistically justifiable. The Fourth Act, so far as it concerns the main theme, exists only to make the Fifth possible, and this in turn is only putting into action the ethics of the "Helena," which is thus the cardinal point of the whole. How this fact accounts for the long comparative neglect and present growing appreciation for the Second Part will appear presently.

The Fourth Act shows us Faust on a mountain, full of life and energy which draw their inspiration from classical memories. His ambition is now useful labor. He wishes to redeem broad tracts of land for settlement from the destroying ocean. That he may gain imperial aid and sanction in this project, Mephistopheles proposes that he should assist the emperor, now engaged in hopeless war with rebellious vassals. All this has no other dramaturgical purpose than to introduce the activities of the Fifth Act. It serves, however, as the vehicle of much political satire, of which the general tendency is that government should be left to those who make it their business to govern.[1] This act was the last written, and shows clear traces of old age. It is incomplete also. The scene in which Faust receives the reward of his magical aid,

[1] Compare Eckermann, March, 1832, toward the end of the second volume, where among much else in the same spirit, Goethe says: "I hate bungling like sin, especially bungling in politics, from which nothing but evil for thousands and millions can come."

in a cause for which, again, it is hard to feel much sympathy, was not written when Goethe sealed the manuscript, in August, 1831.

The Fifth Act shows Faust's ambition in good part realized. He is now a century old.[1] He has compelled the evil spirits to his service, and trade and agriculture flourish in spite of their perversity. He is impatient of opposition, however, and has still to learn moderation in prosecuting a good cause. This lesson is taught him by Mephistopheles' officious murder of Baucis and Philemon, whose small possession was a thorn to his unsatiated desire. Once more that cynical spirit has "willed the ill and wrought the good." And now the end draws on. Want, Guilt, Need, and Care approach his palace. Care alone can enter, and under her breath Faust grows blind, but she cannot touch him, although he refuses from henceforth magic aid. The four depart, but Death appears. Faust sees him not, but in his blindness he urges on his unselfish task, to provide dwellings which will prove for men a doubly precious possession, because they must be maintained by constant effort against the encroaching sea. He thinks he hears the busy spades of his laborers, but they are the Lemures who dig his grave. With the vision of his accomplished purpose before his sinking eyes, he enjoys, even now, in anticipation, that highest moment in which he could say to the present: "Ah! linger still, thou art fair." And so he dies and is laid in the grave.

[1] See Eckermann, June 6, 1831.

There follows a fantastic scene, in which Mephistopheles and his attendant spirits endeavor to prevent the escape of the soul from Faust's body. This cynical degradation of the ideal is interrupted by a heavenly choir and a glory shining from above. For a time these strains of mystic beauty alternate with Mephistopheles' sensuous animalism. But the roses of penitence that the angels strew, burn and scatter the demons, and in a moment when Mephistopheles is distracted by the sensuous charms of certain angel boys, Faust's soul escapes him. This scene is essentially operatic, and that which concludes the drama can hardly be conceived without a musical accompaniment. A chorus of blessed children and various typical figures of the mediæval Church, the Ecstatic, the Profound, the Seraphic Father, here conceived as anchorites, sing celestial hymns. Then the "younger," and the "more perfect" angels take up the strain; and from the highest, purest, of the hermit cells the "Marian Doctor" hails the advent of Mary, the Merciful, surrounded by her penitents.

By turns and together, the Woman who washed the Lord's feet with ointment, the Woman of Samaria, and the Egyptian Mary beg the Blessed Virgin's pardon for "this good soul, that forgot itself but once, and thought not that it erred." And now first since the close of her tragic life, Gretchen appears, and, in a stanza that suggests her impassioned prayer to the Blessed Virgin in the First Part (xviii.), she begs that Mary will bend her countenance graciously on her joy, since "the early love brought to 'clearness'

at last, returns again." "Grant me to teach him. The new day blinds him still." But Mary answers: "Rise to higher spheres. If he dimly apprehend you he will follow." And the mystic chorus concludes with those well-known words: —

> "The eternal-womanly
> Draws us upward and on."

In this gnomic saying we ought to find, if Goethe is serious with us, the key to all. What, then, is "eternally womanly," and who are meant by "us," — human beings, or men as distinct from women? Was it this "eternally womanly" that drew Gretchen upward, or was it not rather the eternal manly? This, at least, will afford us a clear interpretation to that last word of the mystical drama. If by "us" we understand "men," then the "eternal," essential element in women that draws "us" is "love;" but this love is, in its essence, unselfish, altruistic, fruitful, and hence the teaching of the drama is here proclaimed to be that we rise, or are raised, by altruistic effort.[1]

As Scherer has observed,[2] Faust "chooses not wealth but work," and in that work finds his "salvation." To this choice he is brought, mediately by Gretchen, immediately by Helena, for beauty is posi-

[1] If love is selfish, the result, as Bleibtreu cynically says, is:

> "Das Ewig-weibliche zieht uns herab
> Und wird des männlichen Stolzes Grab."

[2] This paragraph is based throughout on, and in part translated from Scherer, Litteraturgeschichte, 719 seq., for I have not found it possible to state what I wished without seeming to borrow from him.

tive, creative, and so here, as in life, contrasted with the ugly, the evil, the negative, as it appears in Mephistopheles-Phorkyas. It is Helena that reveals to Faust the worth of life, of this life, and so frees him from the spirit that denies. The lesson here is the same as in "Wilhelm Meister." Goethe's poet and Goethe's scholar both pass from a sensitive, groping, contemplative, searching, æsthetic existence, under the spur of negative spirits and ideal models, to active, useful labor. In both Goethe puts unselfish activity above the claims of æsthetics or learning. He does not let his poet and actor, nor yet his groping student, find satisfaction. He calls to them: "You must act, work." The greatest representative of German poetry, a many-sided and successful investigator, bows before practical life. He does not look longingly over into strange regions, conscious of his own weakness. No! He knows the practical world, has been of it, has worked successfully in it, and yet has left it. He recommends in his poem what he neglected in his life. Thus "Faust" expressed in a time that was poor in noble deeds the longing for heroic action. It echoed the protest of the statesman Vom Stein against the excess of metaphysical speculation that had thinned the life-blood of Germany.

But already the tide had turned. The change that Goethe demanded he lived to see in a fair way to be accomplished, and we have lived to see the real exalted above the ideal, action above thought, perhaps in undue measure. Hence the general popular com-

prehension of "Faust" as a whole in this period more than ever before, because more than ever before it reflects the popular mind to which, as to Faust, the "logos" is neither "word," nor "thought," nor "power," but "action."[1] The dangers of such a philosophy of life are obvious; some of them are already realized in the luxury of our hedonists and the socialism and nihilism of our proletariat; but "Faust," if rightly apprehended, offers two poisons, each an antidote of the other, which joined together help and strengthen. Neither Euphorion's idealism that will not touch earth, nor Mephistopheles' realism that will not rise above it, but that just mean that idealizes the real and realizes the ideal, — that is the world-wisdom of "Faust."

[1] Part I. sc. 3. Not *Wort*, nor *Sinn*, nor *Kraft*, but *That*.

CHAPTER VII.

SCHILLER'S EARLY YEARS.

BEFORE the Court Theatre of Weimar is a well-known statue. On a single pedestal, side by side stand the two men who more than all the rest made not alone that theatre, but that town and that duchy, famous above any other in literary Germany, — Goethe and Schiller. The elder poet holds a wreath before him on which the younger has also laid his hand, so that either might seem to be offering it to the other, — a fitting memorial of a friendship which, when once it had been formed, was never clouded by any shadow of jealousy. Many have asked the question which the sculptor has so gracefully evaded: Which was the greater poet? Nor can the question be answered categorically at all. For one cannot measure poets as trees, or gauge their intellectual strength by any spirit test. The personal equation troubles the judgment of the critic. They are "not like to like, but like in difference." Among the great mass of Germans Schiller is better known and more read. He is probably more often cited by the average man, and much more often by the average woman. On the other hand, men of higher culture, men trained in

literary study, men who apprehend the spirit of the age, could not but prefer Goethe were a choice forced on them, though they would feel keenly that neither could take the place of the other.

"For the last twenty years," said Goethe to Eckermann (May 12, 1825), "people have been contending which was the greater, Schiller or I. They ought to rejoice that they have two such men to contend about." Indeed they are essentially supplementary to each other. This has been most clearly stated by Scherer (l. c. 587): "The Greeks were naïve. Goethe is a naïve poet, while Schiller defines himself and his fellows as sentimental. The naïve poet *is* nature. The sentimental poet *seeks* nature. One imitates the natural, the other offers the ideal. That has on its side the reality of sense, this has a greater object. That calms, this stirs. That gives us joy in the living present, while this brings us into discord with practical life. And so in friendship the realist rejoices in what he gives his friend, the idealist in what he receives." This supplementary relation of Schiller toward Goethe furnishes the best justification for the customary bracketing of their names in German literature, where they are wont to figure as the *Dioscuri*, the "heavenly twins," who appear together and give one another mutual aid, though in many ways their work and literary influence were almost as strongly contrasted as their lives. We have seen with what Olympian serenity Goethe stepped easily from height to height of life, pursuing an unthwarted course to an untroubled end. It is not so needful to

trace in detail the career of Schiller, for the idealism of his literary work made it much less the immediate reflection of his life. But no man is, or can be, so thorough an idealist that his life shall not affect his work, and one must know somewhat of the one to understand the other.

Schiller's father had been a military surgeon. His mother was an inn-keeper's daughter, at Marbach, and there Schiller was born, Nov. 10, 1759, while his father was away on military service, for it was the time of the Seven Years' War. His childhood was uneventful, but in his 14th year he came in contact with the petty despotism of Duke Karl Eugene of Würtemberg in a way that could not fail to leave its mark on his political attitude in the years that followed. This autocratic ruler had set his heart on a new military academy, and into it he proposed to get by smiles or force the best students from all the classical schools of the duchy. Among the victims thus selected for ducal favor was Schiller, and so intensely against his will that it is perhaps not too much to say with Düntzer that it was a case of "gentle kidnapping."

This school, like "Dotheboys' Hall," had no holidays. Boys could never go home, and especial permission was required from the duke for parents to see their sons. Such interviews could take place, as in a convent, only before a third person. The school was aptly called "Solitude," and all letters that came to it or were sent from it were opened to see if they contained due meed of praise for its princely patron.

Of course such restrictions nursed a rebellious mind in the young Schiller, as it would in any boy of spirit. But his delicate mental organization probably suffered more acutely than most. He could not endure the military uniform that prescribed even the cut of the hair, nor the dreary dormitory that he shared with fourteen other students, who rose at five in summer and six in winter to a gloomy twilight breakfast. Then came lessons, and then the duke reviewed the school, accompanied, perhaps, by members of his court, whose faces were fairer than their reputation. At the review the boys had to show tickets bearing evidence of virtue or guilt, and the duke meted out punishment to the offenders. In the afternoons they might busy themselves with little gardens or walk two by two in solemn procession as boys in German boarding-schools often do to-day. Lessons and another dress parade were followed by supper and bed. Occasionally when the fancy struck him the duke would make a nightly visitation to the dormitories, and indeed he was so fascinated by his pedagogical whimsies that he had founded a similar school for girls, which he had judiciously placed under the patronage of the reigning favorite, Baroness Leustrum.

Of course the caged birds of the Solitude came to have a passion for liberty, and longed to cast off all restraint. Schiller pined and grew sickly. He spent considerable intervals in the school hospital, and in these periods of leisure he practised his juvenile pen and read much, especially in Shakspere, though it is said that he was attached also to "Emilia Galotti"

and "Werther," as well as to the then popular Klopstock, — a variety of literary pabulum which bears witness to an omnivorous hunger rather than to a catholic taste. A little later he fell upon Klinger and Leisewitz, the protagonists of "Storm and Stress."

Schiller had been two years at Solitude when the duke removed the school to Stuttgart (1775), and here Schiller began the study of medicine; but he continued his poetic essays and was cheered a few years later by the visit to the academy of Goethe (1779), who had already proclaimed such bold words of freedom as the young man of twenty felt stirring in his own heart. For it was about this time that Schiller set seriously to work on the first of his published plays, "Die Räuber," the most noted protest against existing political conditions, the most ringing demand for a revision of ethical and moral standards, in all this storm-tossed period. But while it has the enthusiasm of youth, it does not escape juvenile weakness. The characters seem taken from plays that he had read, or from his fellow-pupils. Karl Moor, the robber hero, was what Schiller at that moment aspired to be. "Put me at the head of an army of fellows like myself," he exclaims, "and Germany shall be a republic, by the side of which Rome and Sparta were nunneries." To write this political declamation Schiller was obliged to steal moments from study. At times he feigned sickness, composing with a medical book at hand in which to hide his work. But he was not neglecting his professional studies the while, — in any case not so seriously as to make him fail in his

graduation, which brought his eight years of school life to a close (Dec. 14, 1780).

He was not yet free, however. The duke had educated him for the public service, and Schiller was now called on to serve out his time as regimental surgeon, a position almost as distasteful to him as the one that he had left. The very dress galled him. His friend Scharffenstein tells how at this time "he was cramped into a uniform of the old Prussian cut. . . . His little military hat barely covered his crown, behind it hung a long cue, while round his neck was screwed a horsehair stock several sizes too small. . . . Owing to the padding of his long white gaiters, his legs seemed thicker at the calf than at the thigh. Moving about stiffly in these blacking-stained gaiters, he reminded one irresistibly of a stork." But at last he could revisit his family, and that must have been a great consolation, for he had not seen his parents for eight years.

The "Räuber" was now approaching completion, but it was preceded in publication by a poem on the death of his friend Weckerlin, which naturally scandalized the pious souls of Stuttgart, for it showed the young surgeon in no Christian mood, but filled with a bitter defiance of society and society's creed. But if in literature he seemed now more likely to win notoriety than fame, in medicine his repute was so bad that his superior cautioned the apothecary to put up no more of his prescriptions without approval. Perhaps he had no ambition to excel in this field. On the other hand, publishers had no wish to burn

their fingers with so risky a thing as the "Robbers," and Schiller finally printed it at his own expense, as Goethe had done with "Götz."

Once printed, however, the play made Schiller a literary lion, for like "Werther," it chimed with the unrest of this ante-revolutionary decade. He was soon commissioned to prepare it for the stage, and it was produced at Mannheim, Jan. 13, 1782, where it was received with great applause, though its length had made it necessary to begin the performance at five in the afternoon.

The "Robbers" is a protest against conventional ideas and the unbearable tyranny of the German petty princes. There was something characteristic in the motto of the second printed edition, "*in tyrannos*," beneath a rampant lion. "Law," says its chief character, Moor, the robber and student of Plutarch, "never yet educated a man of true greatness. Freedom produces the grand, the exceptional." This Moor, who is practically an anarchist, has been falsely traduced to his father by his brother, a smug, scheming, respectable scoundrel, Edmund by name, Joseph Surface by nature, who now writes to inform him that he is disowned by his father. Wild with rage at this wrong, Karl proposes to avenge himself on society at large, and with a robber band proceeds to the Bohemian wood, where they find more to plunder than one might have expected in the days of Emperor Maximilian and the Universal Peace. Gold and rings abound in their treasury as in the hoard of an old German king, horses bathe in wine, bravery vies

with atrocity, magnanimity with greed. Karl can even be sentimental. He knows that world-agony which was quite foreign to his prototype, Robin Hood. Surely neither Robin nor his merry men could ever have conceived themselves like Schiller's hero as set apart by fate to be that bull of ancient fable "in whose glowing belly mankind was put to roast." Nor would that prince of archers have comprehended Karl when he exclaims: "With weeping and gnashing teeth I learn that two such men as I would shatter the whole structure of the moral world." But this bombast is in the spirit of the carnival of "Storm and Stress."

By a rather forced and unnatural series of events the robber discovers his father, who has been imprisoned in the dungeon of his brother's castle. This scene, the strongest in the play, inspired Coleridge's fine sonnet "To the Author of the 'Robbers.'" He would have wished to die after writing such a scene, he said, "lest in some after-moment aught more mean might stamp me mortal." Possibly Coleridge, in saying this, had the rest of this very play in his mind, for indeed much of it is calculated to make the judicious grieve. Karl now determines to storm the castle of his wicked brother, who spends the watches of that night in uneasy visions, or discourses to his servant and his chaplain of judgment to come, and at last kills himself just as the robbers are about to capture him. But the rescued father, on discovering Karl's vocation, against which he cherished excusable prejudices, dies of silent grief. Nor is this enough;

in capturing the castle Karl has rescued his lady-love; but since the robbers insist that he shall remain their leader and shall not marry her, he proceeds to kill her, and then surrenders himself to the police, first arranging with cynical philanthropy that the price set on his head shall fall to a poor laborer struggling to support his eleven children.

This unvarnished tale of the "Robbers" is obviously absurd, unnatural, and at times ridiculous. The style, too, was as rough and unpolished as the plot; and the action, abounding in bombast and blood, would now appeal chiefly to the ears and eyes of the "groundlings." But in its day the "Robbers" roused great excitement and enthusiasm in very different social circles, and the ranting Karl bade fair to rival the melancholy Werther. Goethe might well have been disgusted beyond measure, as we know he was, at the hold the play maintained on the German public.[1] Later in life the Olympian became more philosophically tolerant of such pranks of literary childhood. But to Goethe the active privy-counsellor, and still more to Goethe when he returned from Italy, in 1788, it seemed a wanton shaking of the foundations of society, whose success he could not but deplore. The nobles, indeed, stood coolly aloof, but the enthusiasm of the burgher class for the "Robbers" and its kin was not stilled in Germany till it was awed into silence by the orgies of the great Revolution.

[1] Eckermann, Conversations, Jan. 17, 1827. Perhaps he sympathized a little with that prince who told him that "had he been God and had foreseen that Schiller would write the 'Räuber,' he would not have created the world."

One may imagine that Schiller's ducal patron was not greatly edified at this cry of revolt and revolutionary harangue. He seized the occasion of a surreptitious visit of his army surgeon to Mannheim to sentence him to two weeks' arrest, and soon after when the Swiss canton Grisons (Graubünden) sapiently complained that it had been insulted in the play, for their land had been called the "Robbers' Athens," the irritated prince forbade his publishing anything whatever. But Schiller was now in the full swing of youthful fecundity and had advanced far in the composition of a Venetian drama, "Fiesco." He was already earning a greater sum from his pen than his surgeon's pay, and if either occupation must be abandoned he could not hesitate. The duke would listen to no compromise, nor would he allow the poet to surrender his commission.

Schiller, to save his genius, impetuously resolved on flight. His father was a government official, and he did not think it prudent to acquaint him with the project, but he took an affectionate farewell of his mother the evening before he had determined on his departure. His friend Streicher was to accompany him; but when this *fidus Achates* appeared the next morning at the appointed hour he found Schiller's trunk unpacked and the poet occupied in attempting an imitation of an ode by Klopstock that he insisted on reading to Streicher, together with his own lines, before he would consent to begin his preparations. So it was not till evening that they set out in a carriage, armed with one broken and one flintless pistol,

and having fifty-one gulden between them. They drove all night, halting in the middle of their journey at Entzweiungen for midnight coffee, which Schiller accompanied by reading aloud certain manuscript poems. They crossed the Würtemberg frontier in the morning. Once in safety he tried in vain to negotiate for a compromise. The ducal martinet would hear of nothing but return to the service.

So there followed a dark time of exile from family and home, during which Schiller lived in poverty, and even had recourse to the assistance of friends, while he tried in vain to adapt "Fiesco" to the demands of the theatrical manager, Dalberg. At last he sold the play for the trifle of ten louis, and began with fresh enthusiasm to work on a new drama, "Kabale und Liebe." And now he found a generous patron in Frau von Wolzogen and an asylum at her country house at Bauerbach. Here he stayed eight months, still working on "Kabale und Liebe," and beginning another play on Don Carlos, the son of Philip II., whose tragic fate had interested him for some years, as appears from his letters. He employed his gentle leisure also in falling in love with his patron's daughter, but the passion was quickly and effectually nipped by the watchful mamma. She remained his friend, however, and at length aided him to establish himself at Mannheim, where there was prospect that his new plays might see the footlights (July, 1783). Offers of permanent engagement there were also made to him, and his sanguine temperament made him consider them brilliant. At last, in January,

1784, "Fiesco" was put on the stage, with changes suggested by Dalberg, that were not entirely to its advantage from an æsthetic or popular standpoint.

Whatever may have been Schiller's hopes, "Fiesco" was, and deserved to be, a fiasco. But it was not altogether its faults that caused its failure. The picture of the corrupt court life of Germany, though disguised, as in "Emilia Galotti" beneath an Italian, and in this case an historical veil, as well as the democratic tendency of the piece, no longer social, as in the "Robbers," but frankly political, presumed a more developed republican and radical sentiment than the Meiningen public offered or indeed would tolerate. Besides, the play lacked intrinsic value. History might be set at naught, but dramatic unity was not attained. No character in the play could rouse enthusiasm, least of all the hero. And yet "Fiesco" is Schiller's introduction to the historical drama in which his great success was to be achieved.

In "Kabale und Liebe," or Plot and Passion, as the words are sometimes rendered, Schiller won more immediate success. Here the mask of "Fiesco" was thrown aside and German political abuses were attacked at home. It was a genuinely national play, and struck immediately a popular chord. The central idea of a marriage between persons of widely differing social spheres was indeed threadbare. It had been used by Diderot, and was already copied from him in Germany. But Schiller's treatment of the theme presents several original features. The scene is laid in a petty German court. Ferdinand, the

chancellor's son, loves Louise Miller, the fiddler's daughter. The chancellor wants his son to marry the prince's English mistress, a lady, like Portia, "of wondrous virtues," who combines her court functions with a tender love for Ferdinand, though his father is not influenced by this, but by purely selfish motives. Such a canvas gave Schiller free scope to paint the low and cruel intrigues of court life, and in his picture he has fearlessly introduced the scandalous sale of mercenary troops so common during these years of the American Revolution. But all the arts of the courtier are employed in vain against the fair Louise. She remains spotless, even when Ferdinand is deceived into doubting her purity, and, desperate at the thought, poisons both himself and her. In dying he becomes convinced of her innocence, and has still strength to give his father some home truths that point the moral of the inevitable conflict between the frivolous society that was even now hanging on the brink of its ruin and the democratic passions that were to emancipate the new era, the era of "Götz" and "Werther," and of the Revolution.

In "Kabale und Liebe" there is a restless social discontent such as is to be found in Goethe's work before the Weimar period. But it is even more pronounced here, and there is more of Swift's *sæva indignatio*, as one might expect from the external conditions of the work of the younger poet. It is natural to compare "Kabale und Liebe" with Lessing's "Miss Sara Sampson," which till then had been the best German play of modern life. Schiller's work

is the stronger and deeper. It rests less on the tragic situations that social conventions produce than on the grander passions of human nature that supersede them and cast them aside. But it is more fruitful to compare it to "Emilia Galotti," which may even have affected the phraseology in many places, and certainly furnished models for several of the characters, here as in "Fiesco."[1]

During all this period Schiller was constantly harassed by creditors and by ill-health. The latter was his misfortune, the former largely his fault. His essentially unpractical nature found it hard to comprehend that there was any necessary relation between income and outgo. His work, paid for in advance, weighed on him, and his hopeless love, though stifled, had left a desolate place in his heart. To crown all, he had to endure the constant opposition of his father, a thorough philistine, who understood neither his son nor his genius, and would have had him, even now, return to his surgeon's practice at Stuttgart. But nothing could swerve him from his literary career.

Wieland was the critic whose voice at this time had most weight with Schiller, and it was a result of his teaching that the young dramatist undertook to turn his "Don Carlos" into blank verse; but while occupied in this laborious task he made the acquaintance of Major von Kalb and his fascinating wife, Charlotte, a talented and "emancipated" friend of Wieland's Sophie von Laroche and Goethe's Frau

[1] See Kuno Vischer, Lessing als Reformator, i. 186 seq.

von Stein. This acquaintance was to have considerable results for him later; but now, since his engagement at Mannheim was not renewed, he seems to have welcomed the opportunity to exchange that town, connected with disappointment as well as glory, for the cultured society of Leipzig, where his work had already won him warm friends.

Schiller left Mannheim in April, 1785. His two years' stay had enriched German literature with three plays, now classical, and two poems of considerable merit, "Die Kindermörderin" and "Die Schlacht;" but it had left him deeper in debt and in obligation to his friends than ever before. He had passed through the darkest period of his life, however, and went now to happier days and a more congenial circle of friends than he had yet known. He lived for nearly two years in close intimacy with Körner, father of the patriot poet of "Leier und Schwert," and with the group of literary men that Körner's discriminating appreciation had drawn about him. The time was passed partly at Leipzig, later at Dresden. It was under these influences that Schiller was inspired with that "Ode to Joy" that Beethoven has chosen for the close of his Choral Symphony. The morbid spirit of Mannheim has given place to an equally excessive hopefulness, which is a characteristic more frequently found in those pre-revolutionary years than in our more sober time.

Yet even under these favoring auspices Schiller had many distractions, and "Don Carlos" grew slowly. It was interrupted, too, by historical and philosophi-

cal studies, and by preliminary work on the "Geisterseher," an unfinished attempt at romance. He conceived also during these years a brief but ardent passion for Henriette von Arnim, though it was marred somewhat by the interference of her too eager and meddlesome mother. Still, these feelings were not allowed to interrupt the placid platonism of his attachment for Charlotte von Kalb, which indeed survived the intenser love, and brought him at length to Weimar, in July, 1787.

The most important result of the Dresden years was "Don Carlos," which he finished in May, 1787. This achieved a success almost as sensational as the "Robbers," and quite eclipsed for the time being "Kabale und Liebe," though the latter is probably more acted now, and certainly, in its fundamental ideas, is less discordant with the modern philosophy of life. For men to-day are disposed to a skeptical, if not cynical intolerance of such political shibboleths as Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and of the triumphant democratic confidence of Schiller's Marquis Posa and the other heralds of the French Revolution. We are disillusioned in this last decade of the nineteenth century.

"Don Carlos" bears clear traces of the different moods that produced it. As in Goethe's "Egmont" the German and Italian spirit were not fused into a unified whole, so here the joyful anticipations of a golden age that shed their hopeful effulgence over the sanguine poet at Dresden did not altogether transform a play that had been conceived in the

bitter, rebellious temper of "Fiesco." In the original scheme Don Carlos was to have been the hero, and his love for Elizabeth of Valois, now his father's wife, but once his own betrothed, should furnish the tragic theme, as in fact this love had led to the imprisonment and death of the historic Carlos. But into this plan there was now intruded a political element. Marquis Posa, the republican idealist, self-styled "ambassador of all humanity," replaces in Carlos's heart the love of Elizabeth, with his sublimated patriotic enthusiasm and visions of liberty for the Netherlands. To the modern reader the hare-brained characters of Carlos and of Posa quite deprive them of sympathy, for one feels that power in their hands could not fail to be abused; and thus one is half reconciled with the court intrigue to which they finally succumb. Yet it is only just to observe that this was much less likely to be felt in 1787 than now. They had not then seen the Posas of real life, the amiable Girondins, make shipwreck of themselves and their cause. And in this drama their mobile fancy was caught by many winged words which suited well an age that clutched at glittering political generalities. Such, for instance, was Posa's declaration: "I love humanity. Beneath a monarch I can love none other than myself." Or again: "This century is not ripe for my ideal. I live a citizen of those that are to come." This enthusiasm of fantastic unreality, à la Rousseau, so genuine, so heartfelt, and yet so pathetically preposterous in this world of ours, this fools' paradise in "Cloud-Cookoo-Town," built on credulity

and ignorance of history and human nature rather than on study and sober faith, is unspeakably sad to those whom bitter experience has enlightened. An impatient curl of the lip replaces to-day the passionate enthusiasm that once brought crowded audiences to their feet in tumultuous applause.

The success of "Don Carlos" gave Schiller a fame even beyond the borders of Germany. It was this that earned him, five years later (Aug. 26, 1792), the questionable honor of French citizenship under the somewhat distorted name of "Gilleers." Meantime Schiller might well have high hopes in turning, even though uncalled, to Weimar. The duke was known as a patron of letters. Indeed he had already given Schiller a title. Goethe was in Italy and would not overshadow his younger fame, while he may have felt that he could not have counted on his sympathy in any case. So the occasion seemed favorable. And besides, though Karl August was for the moment absent, Charlotte von Kalb was there.

Schiller was warmly received in the mutual admiration club of Weimar literary society. It would have been difficult for them to refuse recognition to a noted litterateur who in his turn had so much faith in the power of that charmed *camaraderie* as to prophesy that in a century the fame of Professor Reinhold, of Jena, Wieland's son-in-law, would eclipse that of Christ. Herder and Wieland he found especially cordial; but in spite of this, and for motives that it is not altogether easy to see, he turned for a time wholly from the drama and poetry and buried

himself deep in historic investigations concerning the revolt of the Netherlands from Spain, with such diligence that he was able to publish a first volume in 1788. This work gave him a title to scholarly consideration. At the same time he completed as much as he ever wrote of the "Geisterseher," whose purpose was to show the narrow bounds that separate superstition and infidelity, — a subject of some interest in the age of Cagliostro and of Voltaire. More significant, if not more important, are the short poems of this period, especially "Die Künstler" and "Die Götter Griechenlands," for they mark the beginnings of the classical influences that were soon to change the whole character of his work.

Schiller found no lack of fame in Weimar, but he was still much in want of money, and the duke's return (October, 1787) had not brought him any realization of his hopes of patronage, in spite of his historical studies. It is possible that this was the cause of his turning again to pure literature and criticism as a means of winning a recognized position. Soon after, Wieland took him on the staff of his journal, "Die Deutsche Merkur," which was an assistance in this direction. But it is noteworthy that all his dramatic work of the later time has a strong historical turn, and this after careful reflection, for he writes in a letter to Goethe, January 5, 1798 : "I grant that I should not choose any subjects but historical ones. Freely invented ones would be dangerous ground to me. It is quite a different thing to idealize what is realistic, and to realize what is ideal ; and this is

what has actually to be done in free fiction. I know it to be within my power to animate and give warmth to any given subject that is definite and limited, and, so to speak, to make it sprout up; whereas the objective definiteness of such a subject would curb my imagination and be an obstacle to my wishes." He was slow, however, in poetic production. He seems to have felt the need of a deeper culture before he could satisfy his new self, and twelve years separate "Don Carlos" from "Wallenstein," his next drama, which is also his greatest. Meantime he is busily studying Euripides and Homer, and preparing himself to be the friend of Goethe.

But the emotional side of Schiller's nature was to find its counterpart before the intellectual companionship was given him. He had seized the occasion of the absence of his friend, Charlotte von Kalb, from Weimar, to make a visit to his old patron, Frau von Wolzogen, at Meiningen and Bauerbach. His return was eventful, for it brought him to Rudolstadt and to the house of the Lengenfelds, whose daughter, Charlotte, was to be his wife. It is curious that but a few months before Schiller should have written to his old friend, Körner, to consult him regarding marriage in the abstract. At that time Körner had cautioned him against his vivid imagination. But certainly it did not run away with him in Rudolstadt, for he writes with delightful impartiality that the two Lengenfeld sisters, Caroline and Charlotte, "are both attractive and please me much. I find them well acquainted with all the new literature;

they are refined, and have both sense and sensibility. They play the piano well, which made my evening a very pleasant one." The judicious may, perhaps, find more indication of the future in his further remark: "I have already lost the inclination for marriage. I favored it from motives of necessity. I could never be happy with any woman of note, or I mistake myself." But then Charlotte Lengenfeld was not "of note," and a little later he has discovered: "I need a being about me and belonging to me whom I can and must make happy, and in whose existence I can reflect my own." Soon after we find him complaining that he is overworked, and counting the cost of housekeeping, possibly at Jena. By the beginning of 1788, his heart was fixed at Rudolstadt, though he has the sweet simplicity to write to Körner that: "Even Charlotte (von Kalb), who sees through me, and watches me narrowly, has no suspicion of it." It was this healthy, natural love that stirred in Schiller the more realistic notes of the "Götter Griechenlands," just as Christiane inspired Goethe's "Roman Elegies." The joy of life that both poems breathe is essentially classical, and they are almost contemporaneous, which is a curious coincidence.

In this mood Schiller set seriously to work to write himself out of debt if possible. With God's help he "would make a thoroughly fresh start at Easter." It was now that he first met Goethe (Sept. 7, 1788), who, as has been said, was not prepossessed in his favor, and treated him with distant courtesy, intensified soon after by Schiller's frank criticism of

"Egmont." Of this meeting, Schiller writes to Körner: "On the whole, my great idea of Goethe has not suffered by personal acquaintance, but I doubt whether we shall ever approach each other closely. Much that is still interesting to me and that I have still to wish and hope for, is no longer of importance to him. He is so far ahead of me, less in years than in experience, that we shall never meet on our separate paths. His whole nature is different from mine, his world is not mine, our ways of thought seem essentially different." But Schiller did not realize how rapidly he was now moving himself toward the position that Goethe came to take after the Italian journey. And on his side Goethe did not realize this change in Schiller at all. To him Schiller was still the author of the "Robbers" and "Don Carlos," though now his picture could have been more justly seen in the stately verse and clear-cut conceptions of "Die Künstler," his latest poem, written at Rudolstadt under the bright inspiration of the Lengenfelds.

Though unwilling to encourage the poet, Goethe was glad to aid the historian to an adjunct professorship at the University of Jena, then the chief centre of German culture. The post carried with it, indeed, no fixed salary, but it gave Schiller a coveted recognition and a social position that was grateful to him. But Goethe was careful that the new professor should not misunderstand their relation, and when Schiller called to offer his thanks and express the customary diffidence as to his qualifications, he was grimly told that "in teaching one learns."

The appointment was an honor, but yet not without embarrassment. Schiller writes to Körner: "I am in fearful straits, as, owing to the many, many tasks which never can be finished this winter, I can make only hasty preparations (for the University lectures). Then, again, my position as professor will involve many new expenses . . . and this year I can spare least of all the necessary time for study. To be sure, after this gloomy period my future will be a brighter one, for now at length my lot seems cast." So his time was chiefly occupied in fitting himself for his new post, while critical journalism furnished a rather precarious support. In his brooding the idea even occurred to him that Goethe had shelved him at Jena that he might reign undisturbed at Weimar. At times he spoke very harshly and surely unjustly of him: "This man, this Goethe is in my way," he writes, "ever reminding me how hardly I have been dealt with by fate. . . . There is now no retrieving all that has been lost." Again he says: "Goethe excites me to a peculiar mixture of hatred and love, somewhat like that which Brutus and Cassius must have felt for Cæsar." So he wrote to Körner. To Charlotte von Lengenfeld, already his closest friend, and soon to be his betrothed, he wrote almost defiantly: "If once I am in a position to let all my energies have play, he, and others, too, will get to know me just as I know his spirit." It was precisely the feeling that he had not such a position that galled him constantly. When Körner asked him to write an epic on Frederic the Great, he answers:

"Get me a wife with 12,000 thalers, a wife with whom I could live, to whom I could cling, and in five years I'll write you a Fredericiade, a classic tragedy, and a half-dozen fine odes into the bargain, since you are so set on them." There is a truth in Schiller's feeling. Great work is rarely produced amid petty cares.

Though Schiller's historical writings are outside the field of pure literature, some notice of them, as of scientific studies in Goethe's case, belongs to the appreciation of his genius. When he was appointed he had expressed a fear, not without just cause, that many students would know more history than he; and he frankly confesses that to him "history is only a store-house for the imagination. Events must be content with whatever treatment they get at my hands." This does not raise high scholarly expectations, nor would such be gratified by a reading of his "Netherlands" or of the "Thirty Years' War" which now soon followed. It is quite true that the standard of historical writing in Germany at this time was low; but Schiller did not even attain that respectable mediocrity. He undertook to write Dutch history, and did not even bestir himself to learn Dutch. But on the other hand, the influence of historical study, however superficial, on one so prone as Schiller to the idealistic and visionary was not without great profit, and the popularity of his histories in Germany trained their readers to demand a higher standard of artistic composition, and a greater mastery of style than they had been wont to look for or to find in the

scholarly work of that generation. Then, too, the "Thirty Years' War" was written to order for a "Ladies' Almanach," and so it helped to widen the circle of readers that could be interested in national history, — a most important thing in the trying times that were at hand.

Schiller's introductory lecture at Jena was received with loud applause and followed by the rare honor of a student serenade. His own description of the scene is dramatic enough to warrant its quotation: "By half-past five," he writes, "the auditorium was filled. From Reinhold's window I saw troop after troop coming up the street, as if they would never end. Though not quite without nervousness, I was glad to see the growing crowd, and it rather strengthened my courage. I had steeled myself into a certain firmness, being no little helped by the thought that my lecture need shun no comparison with any other delivered in Jena, and more than all by the consciousness that all my hearers would confess my superiority. But as the throng grew ever greater, so that hall and stairways were crowded and many turned away from the door, some one near me suggested that for this lecture I should use another hall. I let the proposal be made that I should lecture at Grieszbach's (which would hold three or four hundred). . . . Then there was a droll scene. Everybody rushed out, pell-mell, down the street, and the Johannisstrasse, one of the largest in Jena, was quite filled with students. And as they ran at full speed so as to get good places at Grieszbach's, there was

alarm in all the streets and bustling at every window. At first people thought it was a fire, and the castle guard shared in the general excitement. What is it? What's the matter? was asked by all. Then came the cry: The new professor is going to lecture! . . . I felt as though I was running the gauntlet. . . . The hall was full, so full that an anteroom and a passage leading to the front entrance were both blocked up, while many of the audience stood on the side stairs. So I walked in along an avenue of spectators and listeners and could hardly find my speaker's chair, which I took amid loud pounding which counts here as applause. . . . At the first ten words that I could repeat in a firm tone I got entire control of my face and read on with a strength and sureness of voice that was surprising even to myself."

The first lecture had been very carefully prepared, and produced so great an impression that five hundred gathered to hear his second, and the numbers continued good for the first term. But these were free lectures, and when in the next term fees began to be charged, the audience dropped immediately to thirty, from whom he might hope to collect fifty dollars in all for the half year. But while he was still flushed with the success of the former series, Schiller's sanguine enthusiasm had brought him to the critical point of a formal betrothal with Charlotte, which enraged beyond measure Frau von Kalb, who, as it seems, was even then scheming a divorce from her husband that she might marry him herself. It was just two weeks after the fall of the Bastile, "a fore-

taste, so it seemed to Charlotte's sister, Caroline, "of the victory of freedom over tyranny," and so most appropriate "at the beginning of a charming love-affair." Its course was not altogether smooth, however. Beside the fuming Von Kalb was Körner, the old faithful friend, a little piqued that he had not been taken earlier and more fully into Schiller's confidence; and, worse than all, Charlotte could not fail to view with alarm Schiller's attentions to the witty Caroline. Indeed, he seems to have had a touch of what Jean Paul calls "simultaneous love." As one of his biographers [1] has said: "If you take his letters literally it would seem that he really did not care the turn of a penny which of the two he married, though he would have preferred to marry both." Schiller writes to Charlotte with more judicial calmness than we look for in a lover: "Caroline is nearer to me in age, and then her thoughts, her feelings, are more on a level with mine. She has worked more upon my sense for utterance than you, Lotte mine. But for all the world I would not have you other than you are. Those advantages which Caroline has you must get from me; in my love your being must develop itself, you must be my creation, your season of blossoming must fall in the spring-time of my love. Had we found each other later, you would have robbed me of this delight of watching you bloom to perfect beauty for me." How strange such wooing would seem now-a-days. *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.*

[1] Nevinson, Schiller, 78.

The financial barriers to their union were turned aside by the kind offices of Frau von Stein, who procured for Schiller a competent pension of two hundred thalers from the duke; and so in February, 1790, they were married, not in Jena, but in the dilapidated church of the hamlet Wenigenjena across the Saale, whereby they saved publicity and fees. "The scene was very short," Schiller says; but it opened a vista of untroubled wedded happiness for the fifteen years that remained to him. The complications with Caroline never became serious, and Charlotte gave him that home companionship which was at first the stay, then, as sickness came, the support of his genius.

The first warning of approaching invalidism was a severe illness in 1791. This may have been induced by over study, for he tells us he had been accustomed to work fourteen hours a day. From this sickness he never wholly recovered, and from now till his death he was seldom free from pain and always liable to acute attacks and prolonged periods of sleeplessness. His slender financial resources were nearly exhausted by his illness and convalescence, but he was magnanimously relieved of anxiety on that score by the annual gift of a thousand thalers for three years from Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, that he might have the leisure necessary to his recovery. Joyfully he set about paying arrears of debts, abandoned his distasteful lectures, and, with leisurely purpose and assured steps, began, as he wrote to Körner, "to write for eternity," — words

said, perhaps, in jest, but yet as likely to be realized as any prophecy of literary fame.

It was characteristic of the time that one of the first uses Schiller should make of the gift of leisure was to plunge himself deep in the philosophy of Kant, which then ruled what Richter called "the German kingdom of the air," with Jena as its chief stronghold. It is curious and significant to find these abtruse metaphysics the subject not alone of youthful enthusiasm but even of poetic inspiration. But it was not in Kant's great works, the Critiques of Pure and Practical Reason, that Schiller found most satisfaction. For that he lacked the necessary metaphysical training. It was Kant's "Theory of Æsthetics," in the first part of the "Power of Judgment," that drew his attention to a subject which had already attracted the best powers of Lessing and Herder.

For four years (1792–1796) most of Schiller's prose work is in this field, on which he also now lectured at the university. His æsthetic essays were published in the literary journals "Thalia" and "Die Horen," under various titles. They were greeted by the disciples of Kant with characteristic diversity of judgment, according as each disciple thought that Schiller agreed or disagreed with their master, whom all were determined to follow though they could not concur as to where he was leading them. Fichte said Schiller's work was fit only for amateurs. The dignity of his philosophy was outraged by anything so clear and artistic in form. Others, however, found

that Schiller had obscured the "heavenly simplicity" of Kant. His essays are, at least, intelligible and important contributions to the development of the science of taste and criticism. The most remarkable among them is that on "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry," written in 1795–1796, after Schiller had come under the influence of Goethe. Here he is among the first to observe the attraction that nature has for modern poets, while there is hardly any trace of this among the Greeks, — facts that he would explain by the growing divergence of social from natural life. Thus ancient poetry is naïvely natural, modern poetry is ideal, often artificially so. It is sentimental. Naïve poets, such as Homer and Shakspere, appeal to us by nature, by sensuous truth, by living impressions; sentimental poets appeal to us by ideas. Goethe, Schiller said, could give naïve form to sentimental subjects, and so combined the ancient and modern schools. This essay was in many ways the foundation of modern æsthetic criticism in Germany, as well as the starting-point of the romantic school.[1] But the Schlegels pushed this idea to an extreme, and made of Schiller's sentimental idealism the romanticism which was the contradiction of his classic ideals in literature.

Later in life Schiller regretted the time he had given to metaphysical speculation and the effect that it had had on his mind. "The poet is the only true man," he then wrote to Goethe in a connection that

[1] Compare Goethe's Conversations with Eckermann, March 21, 1830.

will appear later; "the best philosopher is only a caricature in comparison." And Goethe in a more judicial way was disposed to agree with him. The æsthetic lectures, however, came to a forced and abrupt close in the spring of 1793. Schiller passed the following year wandering in search of health. He revisited Stuttgart and his old school at the Solitude. At Ludwigsburg his first child was born. He saw his parents, too, old but hale, and in May, 1794, he was again in Jena.

This journey marks the close of the first period of Schiller's literary life, the period of experiment, of growth, and development. In this respect it suggests comparison with Goethe's Italian journey, though that was a direct cause of change, which this was not. Had Schiller died, as seemed for a time probable, in 1792, he would indeed have claimed a considerable place in German literature, but not among the highest. The achievements for which he was to become a household word in Germany were almost without exception yet to come when the poet returned, still feeble, to take up once more, as he supposed for the rest of his life, the uncongenial tasks of his professorship at Jena. But the long apprentice years were over. What remained of Schiller's life was to be brightened by one of the most precious friendships of which literary annals tell. In 1794 Goethe and Schiller learned to know one another, and in that friendship Schiller found the pole-star of his genius.

Before we follow him into this new and transform-

ing relation it is well to pause a moment to ask what result for him came from those great events in France, which since 1789 had been shaking the pillars of the political world. The Schiller of the "Robbers" had been himself an iconoclast, and years later he wrote gayly that if the French spoiled his hopes in Germany he might try what France would do for him. It has been already said, in speaking of Goethe, that patriotism, as we now understand it, formed but a small part of the individualistic creed of the eighteenth century. "We moderns," Schiller had written to Körner, in 1788, "have within our reach a kind of interest unknown to the Greeks and Romans, with which the interest of patriotism cannot be for a moment compared. This is important only for immature nations, for the youth of the world." At first, therefore, the Revolution in France attracted only moderate attention from the idealist, as compared with Kantian metaphysics. Even up to the execution of Louis XVI. he sympathized mildly with the revolutionists. That event, however, gave him a rude shock, — "the butchers disgusted him so;" and, though he never became a reactionary, he was from that time more conservative in his democracy, and toward the close of his life began to exchange his cosmopolitan sympathies for a lofty confidence in the destinies of his own German race. "The German has been unfortunate in war, but he has not lost his true worth. The German empire and the German people are two quite different things." He did not live to see his confidence justified by the war of lib-

eration ; but in his attitude we may find a valuable commentary on what, to our age, may seem perplexing in the position of Goethe.

Soon after Schiller returned to Jena the great publisher Cotta asked him to assume the management of a literary monthly at a salary that placed him above anxiety. And so Schiller, who had begun to "wish he could be more to Goethe," sought his co-operation in a letter that could not but gratify one who was feeling the isolation of his intellectual pinnacle. Goethe had every reason to hope for healthful stimulus from association with Schiller and with those who had been already gathered for the enterprise, and after a little delay, such as beseemed his literary dignity and social rank, he assured them of his aid. Then, in July, Goethe visited Jena, and as he walked with Schiller from the meeting of a scientific society they began to talk of art, and found to their surprise that they had very much in common, yet with such variety of ideas as to make their talk "an intellectual treat" to Goethe, while Schiller wrote that "each could give the other something he lacked and get something in return."

Though this interchange of great minds may seem to have been long deferred, it could hardly have taken place earlier. Ever since 1787 Schiller had been feeling his way to a new intellectual and æsthetic position. He now regarded much of his earlier work with puzzled dissatisfaction. He seems, too, to have lost confidence in his own creative poetic genius, and it was not till the author of the "Robbers"

had reached this stage of self-knowledge that Goethe could give him the serenity of his broader vision of the world. But Schiller was of those who need sympathy to do their best work. And now beneath the sun of Goethe's friendship his whole nature blossomed. "Every week," said Goethe to Eckermann, Schiller seemed a new and more complete man. Each time I saw him he seemed to me to have grown in reading, knowledge, judgment. He was a magnificent creation, and was taken from us at the very height of his powers." A magnificent creation, indeed, but in no small measure the creation of Goethe.

Almost immediately their friendship grew to rounded completeness, and that wonderful correspondence begins, extending to more than a thousand letters, — a mine for the student of æsthetics and criticism, a monument to literary altruism. Soon Goethe invited Schiller to pass a fortnight at his house in Weimar, just at the auspicious time when the "Essay on Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" was taking shape in Schiller's mind. They were constantly together, and talked unreservedly of their work and plans, nor could the courtly Goethe have offered a more graceful eirenicon than the request that Schiller should adapt to the Weimar stage that "Egmont" that he had once criticised so keenly.

Their new journal, "Die Horen," now formed a constant bond between the poets, though in itself it proved a source of annoyance and disappointment. Schiller's treacherous health prevented him from undertaking a large work; and besides, he had been so

long absorbed in æsthetics and metaphysics that he did not immediately recover his imaginative power. It is interesting, though not surprising, to find that these studious years had made the process of composition more difficult. He writes: "I fear I have to do penance for the violent commotions into which my poetizing threw me. Half the man is enough for philosophizing . . . but your muses suck one dry." It was the first of many blessings that Goethe won him back to poetry again. This was the peculiar service of "Wilhelm Meister," which, as has been said, did not escape wholly unscathed from the not quite emancipated Schiller. The reading of this novel roused in him a creative fervor such as he had not known since his marriage, and during 1795 several lyrics showed that his new æsthetic canons were leading him to higher achievements than he had yet won in this field. To this year belong "Die Ideale," and "Das Ideal und das Leben." "Der Spaziergang," written a little later, is the highest reach of his philosophical poetry, though still too metaphysical to be his best.

Meantime "Die Horen" not only absorbed much strength but provoked bitter attacks from the philistines of the commonplace on the one hand, and the lawless wildness of the romantic neo-Christian mystics on the other, with a chorus of muddled metaphysicians behind both. Subscriptions fell off sharply, so that after three years the journal, begun with such bright hopes, was, at Schiller's suggestion, abandoned. He had the experience of all editors who give their

public better work than they ask or desire. Still, the failure of their hopes for German culture could not but leave some bitterness behind, and the poets conceived the idea of answering the buzzing swarm of critics in a group of "Xenien," epigrams in Martial's manner, which they could publish in the "Musenalmanach" (1796). They printed some four hundred of these "parting gifts" to their critics, whose dull answers are the best justification of the biting severity of the castigation. But to-day these critics are forgotten, and wit that needs a commentary cannot long hold a place in popular favor. The most important result of the "Xenien" was to bring Goethe and Schiller before the world as allied champions of a common cause.

But while these epigrams were still in the making the spring of 1796 had ripened a far greater plan in Schiller's reawakened mind. It is difficult to trace the progress of this overmastering idea, but he now determined to give the rest of his life to the drama, in which he had done nothing since he had come to Weimar nearly ten years before. But what a difference these years had wrought in æsthetic clearness and mental ripeness! No one could perceive this more fully than he. "I advance to this new life with great pleasure and much confidence," he writes to Körner. "Of my former manner there is little that will help me, but I think I am far enough on with the new to make the venture. This much I know, that I am in the right way, and if I do not come up to my own demands I shall still do

more than I have ever yet done in this line." Again he makes this most significant confession: "It is astonishing how much of the realistic mere advancing years bring with them, and how much of it constant intercourse with Goethe and the study of the ancients have by degrees developed in me." The spirit of Goethe inspiring a great idealist is now to give us the classic Schiller.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCHILLER ON THE HEIGHT.

THE newly awakened dramatic activity of Schiller naturally turned first to a subject with which he had been long familiar, and in which the tragic element had from the first attracted him. In his study of the Thirty Years' War it was clearly around the character of Wallenstein that his interest had centred, and when later he visited Carlsbad he had not neglected to make a pilgrimage to the scene of that prince's murder at Eger. This, then, should be the subject of his first mature tragedy. But he must accustom his mind to work once more on the broad lines of dramatic composition. The materials ordered themselves slowly, and it was not till 1798 that he settled down to continuous work on his masterpiece, — the trilogy of Wallenstein.

Yet 1797 had been far from unproductive. He had shaken off at last the trammels of metaphysical theory and had returned to life, tempering his idealizing with a good measure of Goethe's healthy realism. He himself bears eloquent witness to the change that had been wrought in him. "I cannot express to you," he writes to his new friend, "how painful it is to me

to glance from a production of this kind ('Wilhelm Meister' is meant) into the philosophical sphere. There all is so cheerful, so living, so harmoniously solved, so humanly true; here all is so severe, so rigid and abstract, so utterly unnatural; for while all nature is synthesis, all philosophy is antithesis. The poet is the only true man, and the philosopher compared with him is but a caricature."

Especially does this greater realism appear in the ballads of that year, "Der Taucher," "Die Kräniche von Ibykus," "Der Handschuh," "Der Ring von Polykrates," "Ritter Toggenburg," and "Der Gang nach dem Eisenhammer."[1] The precepts that the "Xenien" had tried to convey by the barbed arrows of satiric wit, these ballads taught by the gentler lessons of example. In "Der Taucher" is one of the most remarkable instances of the power of poetic imagination. The nearest approach to a whirlpool that Schiller had ever seen was a mill-race by the Saale, but he has given here a picture of one that is classic in the literatures of the world. These ballads, as a whole, are good in proportion as they approximate the depth and intensity of passion that make Goethe supreme in this field. Schiller's best work has in it invariably an essential element of Goethe, so that we feel that it could not be as it is without him.

It was in this year, also, that Schiller began "Das Lied von der Glocke," perhaps the most prized of his

[1] Many of Goethe's best ballads belong to this year, also; e. g., "Die Braut von Corinth," "Der Zauberlehrling," "Der Sänger."

lyrics in Germany, and certainly the best known abroad. The next year brought "Die Burgschaft" and "Der Kampf mit dem Drachen." It is through the ballads of these two years that the German schoolboy makes his acquaintance with Schiller, and so most of them have become familiar as household words in Germany even to those whose literary studies do not carry them to the higher walks of the drama.

In May, 1797, Schiller had finished, though not in its present form, his Prologue to the play he meant to write on the subject of Wallenstein. Immediately he read it to Goethe, and in a week's visit to Weimar he gained new energy for the greater task. What this visit meant for the "Wallenstein" we see from a letter to his host written soon after: "The noblest and most fruitful way that I can use our mutual communications and make them mine is to apply them immediately to the work I have in hand and turn them to immediate profit; . . . and so I hope that my "Wallenstein" and anything I may write hereafter will exhibit and preserve concretely the whole range of what has passed into my nature from our intercourse."

In November, 1797, he determined to recast what he had written and put it in verse, and by New-Year, 1798, he had finished two acts, and could write to Goethe that he knew he had surpassed anything he had yet done, and this, he modestly but justly adds, "is the fruit of our intercourse." But now constant ill-health began to interrupt his work, and

filled him with the greater discouragement as he saw the materials growing on his hands beyond possible compression into what could be acted on a single night. It was in this spirit that in June he wrote to Körner: "One ought to be careful how one ever undertakes such a complex, endless, and thankless task as my 'Wallenstein.' . . . The labor robs me of all the comfort of my life, . . . for I am haunted with the thought of getting done at a fixed time." Yet it was not until September that the final division into two plays, with an extended prelude, was decided on, again during a visit to Goethe at Weimar. Thus the introductory "Wallenstein's Camp" became an independent piece whose realistic character was peculiarly sympathetic to Goethe, and he urged Schiller that he should bend all his energies to complete it for the opening of the Weimar theatre, which had just been rebuilt. And here it was in fact acted, October 11, 1798.

The reception given to this piece of dramatic realism was most encouraging from every point of view. The romanticists might sneer that he had out-Goethe'd "Götz;" but they felt that they were directly and dangerously attacked, for the play was most enthusiastically received where its full import was best understood. And now Goethe began to urge with more earnestness than before that the "Piccolomini," the second part of the dramatic trilogy, should be brought to a close. For this he assisted Schiller's dramatic work at every step with advice and encouragement, and at last, on Christmas Eve,

1798, Schiller could write to Goethe that this part was completed. "Scarce another for thirty miles around has spent such a Christmas Eve," he said; "I was so harassed and tormented with the fear of not getting done." But Goethe thought the effort by which he had shaken the piece from his mind a gain to him and to it. Schiller was inclined during all his best years to be overcautious, and certainly would have done less had it not been for the stimulus of his friend, who knew the value of Grimm's saying, that in literature one must have the courage of partial failure or one will never win a complete success. It was, therefore, of peculiar importance to "Wallenstein" that in January, 1799, Schiller came to Weimar, where he passed the greater part of five weeks in the older poet's society. On the 30th of that month "Piccolomini" was first produced, to the entire satisfaction of author and manager, while the public seemed awed by the consciousness of a loftier spirit than had yet crossed the German stage.

On this visit Schiller came into closer personal contact with Duke Karl August, who still hesitated, however, to summon him to the court. In February Goethe returned to Jena with him, and for three weeks in daily conversations stimulated him to continue in the way he had so auspiciously begun by completing "Wallenstein's Death," — the final drama of the trilogy. And he was so successful in rousing Schiller's activity that before the end of March the play could be given to the theatre; and on April 15, 17, and 20, 1799, days memorable in the annals of

the German drama, the whole great work was rendered for the first time.

As a stage-play, "Wallenstein" has never been equalled in Germany, and the well-nigh universal applause drowned the carping of such envious romanticists as Caroline Schlegel and the petty malice of Herder. At times the whole audience was in tears, and even the actors with difficulty restrained their emotions. From this moment it was not possible for Schiller to doubt that the drama was his supreme vocation. He had not left Weimar before he had determined to present on the stage the tragic end of Mary Queen of Scots.

In the trilogy of "Wallenstein," the first part, "The Camp," shows the spectator the strange environment in which the double play that follows is to take place, and by which alone it and its protagonist, "Wallenstein," are to be understood and judged. So the Prologue forms an essential part of the whole, without which the rest lacks artistic unity, — a fact often forgotten, especially by foreign readers. It does, indeed, present some difficulties; but he who has not mastered them will never master "Wallenstein." In a series of brilliant scenes the social anarchy of Germany is brought vividly before the spectator, — an anarchy the result of fifteen years of internecine strife, to be followed by as many more of smouldering ruin. The spectator is thus made to see that it is not Wallenstein's fate alone, but the fate of German nationality, that is at stake. On the one hand the military genius and his devotees, with all the vices

and the virtues, too, of a mercenary soldiery; on the other hand, the nation, almost expiring under burdens laid on them wantonly and for no cause that stirred the national heart. Indeed, so wholly is Wallenstein's army divorced from the people that children have been born and grown into schoolboys in his camp, a generation that has never known any other social condition than that of legalized plunder. The army has its preachers, also, and in fact its own theology. The credulous ruffians gather open-mouthed about a capuchin, who gives them a sermon in the style of Abraham a Sancta-Clara's "Merk's Wien," in strange doggerel spiced with bits of Latin, that is a perfect marvel of rough and rollicking humor. Sutler-women, recruits, veterans, peasants, Croats, all contribute to the many-colored picture. The whole treatment is by types; the stupid, the unscrupulous, the gay youngster, the professional trooper, are all characterized in their relations to Wallenstein, to the civilians and to the nation, and in their conception of their own function.[1] And behind it all, though neither Wallenstein nor the emperor appear, there looms up the inevitable conflict between the old order of society represented by the imperial court and this new order that the genius of Wallenstein has imposed on the old as a condition of its existence. The bright panorama, in spite of the superb soldier song with which it closes, leaves us with an anxious foreboding of impending catastrophe, that is, in the true tragic mood.

[1] Compare Scherer, Deutsche Litteraturgeschichte, 594 (1st edition).

The second part, "Die Piccolomini," introduces the spectator into a higher political sphere. The date is 1634. The Piccolomini, father and son, Octavio and Max, are officers in Wallenstein's army, and the former, while enjoying the general's complete confidence, has been chosen secretly by the court to be his successor when it shall seem possible to depose him with safety; but of this Max is ignorant. Wallenstein, though he knows the ill-will of the court, supposes they will not dare to dispense with him. He, however, thinks he can dispense with them, and is already negotiating with the Swedes, enemies of the empire, but, as Wallenstein persuades himself, better fitted to be the masters. The conflict of genius and duty in Wallenstein will be reflected also in each of his generals, who have to decide between loyalty to the emperor and fidelity to their chief. And in this conflict each will decide according to his nature. The typical method is again employed, but here a secondary plot comes in to give to one of Wallenstein's subordinates a pre-eminent place, and so to give this play its name.

The central figure of "Die Piccolomini" is Max. He is attached to the emperor by loyalty, to his father by filial duty, to Wallenstein by admiration, and to Wallenstein's daughter, Thekla, by love. The conflict of these feelings forms the subject of the play, which breaks off abruptly in tragic suspense. Octavio furnishes his son with proof of Wallenstein's intended desertion of the imperial cause, and the lover, with a soldier's bluntness, rushes away to de-

mand an explanation from the lips of his idolized general. Evidently there is here no complete catastrophe. Take the play alone, and one might almost say of it, as Jean Paul Richter did: "It is excellent — rather tedious — and false. Beautiful language, strong poetic passages, some good scenes — no character, no stream of action, and no conclusion." Richter, as we know, was not very kindly disposed toward Schiller, his affiliations were rather with the Romanticists; but there is justification for nearly all his strictures, and "Die Piccolomini" would probably never have achieved success as an independent production. It needed the concluding drama, "Wallensteins Tod," to give it artistic completeness. For this last play, as Goethe said, "sprang from the two preceding like the flower from its sepal." But whether "Wallensteins Tod" needed "Die Piccolomini," or rather whether without serious loss it could not have been so modified as not to need it, is a question that has been much discussed, with the balance inclining perhaps in favor of an affirmative decision. But we have to do here with what is, not with what might have been, and it is not very safe for critics to put asunder what Goethe and Schiller joined after long and careful deliberation.

This last play has, beside its main plot culminating in the death of Wallenstein, a second and subordinate one, which deals with the loves of Max and Wallenstein's daughter, Thekla. Thus the unity of action is violated, and the tragedy loses somewhat of its sombre sternness. But he would indeed be a

heartless critic whom the beauty of this subordinate plot did not blind to a fault so graceful as to be itself a virtue; for the loves of the gallant officer and the noble but artless girl, ardent and simple, yet clear-sighted and honest to her highest self, have lost none of their fascination for the young men and maidens of Germany to-day. All the world loves a lover and all the world love Max and Thekla; even Schiller himself, who was sternly objective to his other characters, fell in love with these gentle creations of his fancy.

Wallenstein's daughter is a delicate flower, blooming its brief summer on an Alpine crag around which the storm clouds are gathering. In "Die Piccolomini" (iii. 7) she sings a wonderful little song that seems to breathe foreboding of her coming fate.[1] Her love is used by unscrupulous intriguers to bind Max to the cause of her father. But Wallenstein will not, perhaps already he cannot, return to his allegiance. What is left for Max? Of himself he might waver, but Thekla, with a woman's more idealized sense of

[1] It is thus translated by Charles Lamb (cited by Coleridge, The Piccolomini [ii. 6]):—

"The clouds are blackening, the storms threatening,
The cavern doth mutter, the greenwood moan,
Billows are breaking, the damsel's heart aching,
Thus in the dark night she singeth alone,
Her eye upward roving:
'The world is empty, the heart is dead surely,
In this world plainly all seemeth amiss;
To thy heaven, Holy One, take home thy little one,
I have partaken of all earthly bliss,
Both living and loving.'"

duty and readiness of sacrifice, sees that the tragic end is the only noble one. With his devoted soldiers Max falls, resisting the advance of the Swedes, and Wallenstein's world-embracing plans are dashed in pieces on the simple uprightness of his daughter.

In Max and Thekla, as in Goethe's Iphigenie, we are dealing, not with characters, but with types. Wallenstein is a more complex creation. One may often be in doubt whether to sympathize with, to condone, or to condemn his high-minded plans for the delivery of Germany from religious strife by a broader toleration than could be hoped from the imperial court. Even he himself is not sure of himself. Like Macbeth, he hesitates, and is lost where a less noble mind might have attained its lower ambition. But in blackest disaster he is himself again. How boldly his words ring out: "It must be night that Friedland's star may shine!" And when at last he falls a victim to base revenge and hired assassins, we feel a perplexity and a sympathetic fear of fate, carrying out the mood of the Prologue in the spirit of true tragedy, according to the Greek conception, which Schiller was certainly following here, though he had once condemned it, before he had learned to know Goethe and the power of classic realism. It is this realism that he has sought to combine with the ideal, as it appears in Max and Thekla, to a completer reflection of life than either could offer alone.

The minor characters of the drama are vividly drawn, but tend always to the typical. Octavio, the

cool, calculating Italian, friend of Wallenstein's youth, and instrument of his fall, whose success brings with it its own nemesis in the death of his only son, contrasts with the unscrupulously ambitious Tertzky. The reckless Illo, the sturdy and loyal Tiefenbach, and the Croat Isolani, who follows war as a trade for the revenue it promises and the plunder it offers, the cautious Scot Gordon, and Buttler, with his self-deceiving Irish impetuosity, have each a well-marked and sustained individuality. The women are somewhat less distinctly drawn. Wallenstein's wife is weak and indefinite; Countess Tertzky is a rather unsuccessful Lady Macbeth. But the interest here was so centred on Thekla that it might have been an artistic mistake to distract attention from so beautiful an ideal of simple truth and loving womanhood.

Almost the whole of May, 1799, was passed by Goethe with Schiller, in Jena, and partly as the result of this the plan of "Maria Stuart" was so fully elaborated in June that composition on it could be begun. But Schiller had now won greater confidence; he desired no essential change in the dramatic methods of "Wallenstein," and so the piece progressed in its formative stage far more rapidly than "Wallenstein" had done. Already, in September, he had reached the famous scene between Mary and her captor, Elizabeth, in the third act; but here he paused a while and took up the "Song of the Bell," which was finished during the latter part of that month, again while Goethe was with him in Jena. But immediately after, in October, he resumed

the drama again; for there are now few pauses in the perennial flow which intercourse with Goethe aroused in his mind; and this association was made unbroken by his removal, in December (1799), to Weimar.

"The Song of the Bell" is Schiller's most popular lyric, nor can the critic blame the general voice. Its avowed imitations, Longfellow's "Building of the Ship" and "Forging of the Anchor," will best describe its general structure to English readers. The various processes of casting a bell until at length it is placed in its belfry, "to call the living, mourn the dead, and break the lightnings,"[1] are brought before the reader with all the charm of poetic genius, and the account of each stage in the casting is followed by reflections on the tasks and scenes of daily life which it may be thought to symbolize or typify. Thus the whole becomes a reflection of popular aspirations and activities, and so was well suited to be a universal favorite among the multitudes whose simple life it portrayed, and that just because it never went beyond the narrow philistine horizon of town-hall and fireside, while within these limitations all was treated with consummate clearness and art.

In Weimar, Schiller might find, as he said, "very little intellect in circulation;" but he was close to Goethe and to the theatre, and like his friend, whose "soul was like a star and dwelt apart," he was far

[1] This was the motto of a bell at Schaffhausen, and Schiller took it for the motto of his poem: "Vivos voco, mortuos plango, fulgura frango," — the last an allusion to an old and general superstition.

above the petty scandals of that little *Residenz*. Besides, it was a relief to escape from the Kantians of Jena, who, as Schiller told Goethe, "were only fit to play cards with." The climate of Weimar, too, was some alleviation to him, though he suffered acutely at intervals from this time until his death. Best of all, however, he was able to give his whole strength to literary composition, undisturbed by professorial or editorial cares, and in most delightful home surroundings; while, socially, he was on at least friendly relations with all but the jealous Herder.

Under these auspicious conditions "Maria Stuart" grew apace, so that it could be put on the stage in June, 1800. "At last," he writes to Körner, "I begin to be master of dramatic composition and to comprehend my craft." This is entirely true if we are to understand by his words a mastery of blank verse, or a mastery of the art of telling the dramatic story as he had conceived it; but if mastery of dramatic conception is meant, he may seem a little sanguine. Nowhere had Schiller yet shown such power of theatrical pomp, nowhere had he arranged his materials so artistically, indicating clearly in the first act all the means of which he intended to avail himself to carry the action in swift and unbroken course, through the gathering clouds of the second and third, to the crisis in the fourth, and the catastrophe with its nemesis in the fifth. But on the other hand, the conception leaves much to be desired, and there was more division of sentiment regarding it in the literary public than had been shown toward "Wallenstein." It was undeni-

able that the story was extremely well told. Madame de Staël thought it the best conceived and most pathetic of German tragedies, but critics were quick to see that he had not made use of some of the highest tragic elements that history might have afforded him. At a time when Catholic and mediæval Europe was struggling with vain heroism against the rising tide of free thought and national development, Mary and Elizabeth could easily have been made types of these opposing tendencies, and so the drama might have won the higher interest that attaches to "Wallenstein." But Schiller chose, as it seems with deliberate intention, to rely almost wholly on the personal interest that the beautiful captive queen might rouse, and it is the pathos of her fate, more than its tragic necessity, that impresses the spectator.

This appears most clearly if it be considered what have always been the favorite scenes of the play. There are three that occur to every reader. In the first, Mary describes the joy she feels in the new liberty that allows her to walk in the park of her castle-prison. The scene is half operatic and lyric, and is highly pathetic in itself, but it is not necessary to the action. Then there is the climatic scene between Mary and Elizabeth, unhistorical of course, but a marvel of vigorous dialogue. Yet in its effect on the drama it is less commendable; for the rage that it induces in the insulted Elizabeth influences her to permit the execution of Mary, and thus, by degrading her character, lowers the tragic dignity of the whole. And finally, among the most affecting passages in the

play are Mary's farewells before her execution; but these are as unnecessary to the catastrophe as is the anticlimax of the scenes that follow it at the court of Elizabeth. It is these passages, and the intrinsic fascination of the subject itself, that have given vitality to the tragedy as a whole, not in Germany alone, but in England also.

Scherer has remarked that the characters in "Maria Stuart" are neither richly furnished nor exhaustively treated. Neither Mary nor Elizabeth have Wallenstein's tragic depth; we do not feel that these are people to move the world, and shape the destinies of men. Both are less grand than their historic prototypes; perhaps because, had Schiller given them their place on the stage of the world, it would have been more difficult for him to preserve the pure objectivity to which he now aspired. The minor characters are, in the main, types, as in "Wallenstein." The weak vacillation of Leicester is contrasted with the calculating, passionless statesmanship of Burleigh, and the passionate but chivalrous fanaticism of Mortimer. Here, too, Schiller is purely objective; and it is perhaps noteworthy that, while in "Wallenstein," Max, the idealist, has the sympathy of the author, he shows none for the idealism of Mortimer, though no German poet has made more effective use of the Roman ritual, that fired Mortimer's heart, than the Protestant Schiller in this drama. Still, taken as a whole, "Maria Stuart" is inferior to "Wallensteins Tod," while it marks an advance on it in metrical skill and narrative composition.

Schiller now, from time to time, replaced Goethe in the management of the Court Theatre, for acquaintance had gradually removed the duke's scruples. It was thus that, while writing "Maria Stuart," he had found occasion to translate and adapt Shakspere's "Macbeth" to the needs of the Weimar public, and the influence of this close contact with Shakspere was marked in his next work. For he was now revolving in his mind a dramatic subject so peculiar that he did not venture to discuss it with Goethe till it should have taken definite form. "A demon pursues me," he writes, "till I can see the two pieces I have next in my mind fairly written out." These were "Warbeck," which remained unexecuted, and "Die Jungfrau von Orleans," which holds a unique place in the history of the German stage.

At first, it is clear that Schiller intended to treat the story of the holy Maid as he had done that of Mary or Wallenstein; he would idealize history, but he would follow its main outlines and essential situations. And so he set about a deliberate study of authorities, as the records of the Weimar library testify. But the more he progressed in this work, the more the difficulties that it involved were revealed to him, and he abandoned in great measure his earlier plan, allowed his fancy freer scope, and gave to the play that resulted the significant sub-title "a romantic tragedy," thus preparing his readers for what is to follow, and confessing at least a partial sympathy with the aims of the new Romantic School which was then formulating its critical canons in Weimar and Berlin.

The plan of this new play gave him much trouble, as appears from his correspondence,[1] but by the middle of November he was well advanced in the second act, and on Christmas Eve, 1800, he writes to Goethe: "The historical part has been mastered . . . and made use of to the fullest extent possible. The motives are all poetical, and for the most part naïve." And a little later he writes to Körner: "My tragedy, though it progresses rather slowly, is gaining good form. The subject itself sustains my interest, and I am in it with my whole heart; and besides, it flows more out of my heart than any of my previous pieces, where reason has to struggle with the subject." That is, he found opportunity here to give his idealizing fancy freer scope than his new æsthetics and classical studies had permitted in these later years.

Toward the close of his work he grew quite enthusiastic. "I expect much good from my last act," he writes on April 3; "it explains the first, and thus the serpent will bite into its own tail. As my heroine stands alone in it, and is deserted by the gods in her misfortune, she gives more distinct evidence of her independence and of the prophetic part she has to play. The close of the last act but one is very dramatic, and the thundering *deus ex machina* will not fail to produce its effect." Goethe was disposed to share Schiller's anticipations, and writes to him that the day of its completion "forms an epoch."

The play — first acted in Leipsic, September 18,

[1] See the dates June 16, July 26, August 2, September 3, November 19, December 24, 1800.

1801 — was an unparalleled triumph for the poet. Silent, and with bared heads, the audience greeted the author at the theatre's exit. Parents lifted their children to see him. The critics of the press did not know what to say of so new a *genre*, and limited themselves to general terms of admiration. But time has enabled us to judge more dispassionately both the drama and the enthusiasm it evoked. Its immediate popularity was in part due to the timeliness of the subject. Joan of Arc had liberated France from English invaders so wonderfully that God had seemed to aid with miracles her simple patriotism. Germany was now half subjected to Napoleon, and the national spirit found a consolation in the inspiring mediæval story. But in part this popularity was due to what will probably now be reckoned a defect, — its romantic idealism. For in spite of its careful composition, in spite of its firm metrical structure, and of some truly Shaksperian passages and dramatic situations of great power, it was, in its mediævalism, in its more frequent use of rhyme and occasional lyric strophes, a distinct concession to the romantic doctrines of the Schlegels. Further evidence of this tendency can be found in Schiller's proclamation, as stage manager, that he would "wage eternal war with all naturalism." This was said of the delivery of blank verse, but it shows that he could not yet see the relation of art and nature, — of the German and the classical spirit that, in their harmonious union, made the supreme strength of Goethe's genius.

Unnatural idealization is the fundamental fault of

the "Maid of Orleans." There is more of true tragedy in the story of Joan of Arc than in Schiller's artificial heroine. He may have intended, as Scherer observes, "to embody the naïve," but he does not always perceive the narrow bound that separates the childlike from the childish. "Schiller does not know how to express the charm of nature. On this rock the sentimental poet suffers shipwreck. Declamatory lyric has to pass for the missing naïveté," [1] and so the supernatural, miraculous element is more disturbing here than in "Faust." The realists of the play, Talbot and Thibaut, are caricatures. Joan's love for the English Lionel is a gratuitous humiliation of the single-minded purity of the historic Maid, and the arguments by which she brings Burgundy back to his French allegiance are so puerile as to justify a critic's remark that *he* may be touched by them, but *we* certainly are not. It is difficult, therefore, to understand how Goethe could find the "Maid of Orleans" "so complete, so good, so beautiful, that he knew nothing to compare with it." That it should be still a favorite with the great mass of German theatre-goers is due partly to the real merits of the individual scenes, partly to the humiliating fact that the theatre-going public is neither æsthetically trained nor critically cultured.

In the autumn of 1801, Schiller visited his friends in Dresden, and in the gallery there discovered how much of beauty he had passed by unheeded, because uncomprehended, fourteen years before. So far had

[1] Scherer, l. c. 602.

Goethe helped him to appreciation of art, and especially of the antique. This found its clearest reflection in his next drama, "Die Braut von Messina," though many things interrupted his work on it, and the play was not completed till two years later, after the plan of "Wilhelm Tell" was already far advanced.

Meantime Schiller had been ennobled, at the duke's initiative, and quite without any effort on the poet's part. No title could add to Schiller's distinction, but his nobility conveyed some privileges which, in a small court like Weimar, would be socially convenient, especially to his wife, who by her marriage had sacrificed those that she held by her birth. "You must have laughed," he writes to Humboldt, "when you heard of our rise in rank. It was an idea of the duke's, and, since it has happened, I am glad of it for Lolo's and the children's sake."

"The Bride of Messina, or the Fraternal Enemies" had been in Schiller's mind, in its essential outlines, as early as 1788, but everything in the play, except those essential outlines, had been radically changed by the æsthetic development of the poet during these fourteen years. Had it been written then, it would have been, like "Don Carlos," a stormy melodrama; it is the most classic and most stately of all German tragedies. For its composition, Schiller sought deliberately to infuse his mind as far as possible with classic literature. He read Stolberg's translations of Æschylus, for he had too little Greek to attempt the original. But his soul was already so attuned to classic ideals that even in this form their effect was

remarkable. "Not for years," he writes, "have I been filled with so much awe as by these deeply poetic works." And with this inspiration, he produced a tragedy that seemed to him worthy of its source. He says that it was at the initial performance of the "Bride of Messina" that he "received for the first time the impression of a true tragedy." And to this extent at least Schiller's feeling is justified: there is no modern play that produces in the cultured spectator a frame of mind so closely analogous to that evoked by the Greek tragedies occasionally acted at our universities.

The "Bride of Messina" was as different in form from all that had preceded it as the "Maid of Orleans" had been. Not merely that the scene was shifted from mediæval France to mediæval Italy, but that we find ourselves in a new moral atmosphere, while the form of composition is changed to closer conformity with classical method, not alone by the introduction of a chorus, or rather of two rival choruses, in imitation of Greek usage, but also by presupposing, as having taken place before the action of the tragedy begins, much of what goes to make up the tragic situation, which in a modern drama would form part of the play itself.

But here, as Madame de Staël justly observed, Schiller attained rather an imitation of the form than of the spirit of the classic drama; for, while a Greek chorus speaks for the interested but not participating spectators, the choruses in the "Bride of Messina" are made up of the contentious followers of the rival

brothers; and their occasional lyric outbursts are only interludes in the rather violent part given them in the action. And the same general criticism would apply also where knowledge is assumed of foregoing but essential parts in the tragic situation. It is a different thing to take as one's subject a detached episode in the story of Agamemnon, which all spectators know, and a similar one in the story of two fraternal enemies, in whose tragic fate those spectators have first to be interested.

Schiller probably felt this, for the plot of the play, in its extreme simplicity, is hardly more than a situation. Two brothers, Manuel and Cæsar, have been bitter rivals from youth, but they unite in love for their mother, Isabella, by whom they have been reconciled. Here the play opens. A messenger tells Cæsar that a certain fair Beatrice, for whom he had been impetuously searching, is discovered at last. He hastens away. Then Manuel tells the chorus how that very night the love of his heart had been brought to Messina. The spectator feels that this lady, too, is Beatrice, and soon learns that she is the sister of both Cæsar and Manuel, of whom oracles had foretold that she should unite the brothers in love, but also be the ruin of her race. Therefore she was to have been put to death, but her mother had suffered her to be hidden in a convent, and, now that the brothers are reconciled, mindful only of the favorable oracle, she brings her back to seal the bond of their union. Thus she is guilty of what Greek tragedians know as "hybris," in presuming to trifle with

an oracle. And punishment follows hard on her presumption. For her brother Manuel has seen her in her convent seclusion, loved her, and won her love; and Cæsar too has conceived a passion for her, — of which, however, both she and Manuel are ignorant. This is the whole plot, or rather, as has been said, the whole tragic situation. Cæsar finds Manuel with Beatrice, and kills him. Isabella curses the unknown murderer, heedless of the warnings of the chorus; and so, when all is discovered, Cæsar can but kill himself. Thus the oracle is avenged. *Atē* has put down *Hybris*.

Perhaps nowhere on the modern stage has the Greek conception of relentless avenging Nemesis, that pursues pride to utter destruction, been so well presented. This awe of doom, which is peculiar to Greek tragedy and quite apart from what we feel when we listen to "Othello," or "Hamlet," or "Lear," is attained here, and in so far Schiller accomplished what he undertook. It was, moreover, altogether consistent with this purpose that he should have made no effort at the delicate portrayal of character. The Greeks, too, had dealt rather with types. Nor will the judicious critic hold it a valid objection that the sentiment of the play, its passionate, almost romantic, love is distinctly modern; for there is no æsthetic reason why the Greek form might not suit one plane of sentiment as well as another. The real trouble with the "Bride of Messina" is that the two planes of feeling are not held sufficiently distinct. With a varnish of Christianity the rival brothers are

essentially pagan, though indeed, as Schiller himself observed, this was not wholly unnatural in Sicily, where, since the days of Frederic II., Mohammedanism had neutralized the active principles of Christianity, so that much masked paganism survived both in popular superstitions and in popular ethics.

In stateliness and dignity of diction, the "Bride of Messina" is perhaps unsurpassed in German, and the true classical irony, "that mixture of jest and earnest which for many is more mysterious and darker than all mysteries," as Schlegel has said, the irony of fate, radically different from that "irony" that was then suffering such abuse at the hands of the romanticists, was represented here with greater strength than ever before or since in Germany. A single strophe from the final chorus may suggest to the classical student interesting lines of comparison between the æsthetics and the ethics of Schiller and of Sophocles or Æschylus: —

"Through the streets of the city,
By misery followed,
Misfortune strides,
And lurking she creeps
Round the houses of men.
To-day upon this
Portal she knocks,
To-morrow on that.
But none spares she wholly.
Sooner or later,
The dreaded, unwelcome
Message of pain,
She prints upon every
Threshold where mortals dwell."

But whatever its abstract merits, the "Bride of Messina" did not achieve so unqualified a success on the stage, nor yet in its printed form, as the "Maid of Orleans." The students of Jena did indeed give it an enthusiastic reception, but they were naturally almost the only spectators whom the fresh study of Greek models had put in a mood to comprehend its classic beauty. But while they cheered him vigorously at the close of the play, Karl August thought he had gone too far, and perhaps Goethe shared the feeling, for in Schiller's letters at this period there occurs a curious passage that suggests that the two were not then in perfect critical accord. "If Goethe," he writes, "had any faith left in the possibilities of something good being done, and any continuity in what he does do, many things might yet be realized here in Weimar, both in art generally and especially in the drama. At all events something might come up and this dreary state of blockade be broken. Alone I can do nothing. I feel often like looking about for some other seat and sphere of action. If there were a tolerable situation anywhere I would go." At the time this letter was written Goethe was engaged on his "Natürliche Tochter." There are some indications that he kept his plans more a secret than usual from his friend. This, and the ups and downs of Schiller's precarious health, may account for a pessimistic mood, though in his sober mind Schiller could not have expected a *popular* success for the "Bride of Messina."

"Wilhelm Tell" was already planned before the

"Bride of Messina" was finished, but Schiller laid it aside for a time and occupied himself in preparing for the German stage Picard's "Encore des Menechmes" and "Médiocre et Rampant," which appeared as "Der Neffe als Onkel" and "Der Parasit," and are still frequently acted in Germany. It was not till June (1803) that he at last concentrated his thoughts again on "Tell," and not till the end of August that he began to give the work its final form.

Here, again, he chose a new country for his scene, a country whose old traditions accorded with the revolutionary politics of the new era to make it a fit site for a drama of national freedom. The idea of the subject came from Goethe, who had written to Schiller six years before that he thought "Tell would suit for an epic poem." Schiller had warmly commended the idea of his friend, just then fresh from the epic success of "Hermann und Dorothea." But the plan soon "lost the charm of novelty," as Goethe said. Besides, he thought the material better suited for a drama, and so better adapted to his friend than to himself. From 1802 the subject is recognized as Schiller's, who writes to Körner: "If the gods grant me strength to put into shape what I have in my head, it will be a thing of power to shake the theatres of Germany."

Several things conspired to check his progress. Schiller had never seen Switzerland. He felt it necessary to make many preliminary studies that he might catch the local color, which was more necessary

in this national drama than in the romantic "Maid of Orleans," or in the classic "Bride of Messina." Then, too, at this time he was much occupied with Madame de Staël, whom Goethe had rather put off on him; for having once invited her to dinner and used all his courtier's tact to avoid her insatiable inquisitiveness, that shrewd privy counsellor had suddenly discovered that his health did not permit him to receive strangers.

Madame de Staël, who had been for some time in Germany, studying foreign manners under the guidance of Wilhelm Schlegel, was a woman of great talent, and was now gathering material for her "L'Allemagne," a book in which she strove to convince France that it needed a cosmopolitan spirit. Schiller could not fail to esteem her genius, though he did not sympathize with her philosophy, for he said that, unlike the popular metaphysicians of Jena, Madame de Staël "allowed nothing hard or unfathomable. What she could not light with her torch did not exist for her. Of ideal philosophy she had a natural horror, for she thought it led to mysticism and superstition, and these choked her like nitrogen." He found her indeed witty and keen, with an extraordinary flow of language, but without much ideality or poetry, and quite without what the Germans prized as feminine reserve. Her society seemed to oppress him, and he writes to Goethe of the difficulty he finds in composing "in the present suffocating air." But as he had "Tell" warmly at heart, he avoided her as far as possible until he had finished the drama, in

February, 1804. When once she had left Weimar he says he "felt as though he had recovered from a severe illness."

In writing "Tell" Schiller was aided by Goethe's reminiscences, and by those of his wife, by maps and books which Cotta supplied, and, as he says, especially by Shakspere's "Julius Cæsar," which "buoyed up his own little craft, and put him in a most productive frame of mind." The legendary materials were borrowed freely from the Swiss chronicler, Tschudi, who assigns to the story a local habitation and the date 1307–8. But the tale belongs to the common folk-lore of nations. The hat on the pole to which the people are to bow as a sign of subjection, the refusal of the free mountaineer, the cruel jest by which he is forced to earn the promise of pardon by shooting the apple from the head of his son, the faithlessness of the governor, his assassination, and the liberation of the cantons from foreign bondage, is a tale familiar to every schoolboy. But Schiller's treatment of it is noteworthy, first of all, because this is the first of his dramas where realistic activity is crowned with the success that normally attends it. In thus abandoning a tragic conclusion Schiller made a material step toward the position of Goethe. Gessler is indeed killed, but his part is unsympathetic and secondary, so that his death is not felt as tragic by the spectator. Then, secondly, in construction "Tell" marks an entire departure from the classic standard of the "Bride of Messina." The change is not merely formal, as by giving up the chorus, but essential, for it abandons

the fundamental conception of *Hybris* and *Atë*. The resistless power of destiny and fate no longer fills the foreground. Rather do we find a cheerful confidence in the power of sturdy manliness over destiny, a confidence that Schiller had not expressed since "Don Carlos," and which marks an ethical change of great significance in the author's conception of life.

And so we come to the third point. "Tell" is sharply differentiated from all the plays of the Weimar epoch. Its differentiation from the earlier dramas is as sharp, but yet of another character. The confidence in mankind and its destiny shown in "Fiesco" and the "Robbers" was a rebellious, anarchical confidence, born of wild notions of equality, fraternity, and a millennium to be won by destruction of the existing social order. But in "Tell," age and the French revolution have ripened his experience, the visionary, idealistic reformer has become a practical realist, taking society and mankind as he finds them. So the insurgents of the Rütli in "Tell" know what they want, they have definite grievances and definite aims, they seek no "rights of man," but they have a healthy determination to regain their chartered rights. Tell himself stands apart from them. He is a type of natural independence. He will not bind himself to act with others; but when he feels the measure of wrongs is full he kills the tyrant dispassionately, almost regretfully.

So "Tell" stands apart and marks an advancing serenity that well becomes a great poet's last work. And where we can compare it, as like to like, with

what has preceded we feel, too, that there is growth, that Schiller has not yet attained the crowning point of his genius. Never had he caught so perfectly the spirit of his scene, the *genius loci*, as here. The mountain pastures, with their tinkling herds, the clear lakes, lashed at times to sudden fury by blasts from icy gorges, the snowy peaks, the far-off glaciers, the gloomy pines, the wild ravines with their rushing torrents, give the play a scenic individuality. One needs not to have seen Switzerland to feel that here is something real, though unknown, while all who have lived in these scenes pay their tribute to the truthfulness of the poet's imagination. And yet the Swabian hills were the only mountains that he knew.

"'Tell' is more effective on the stage," so Schiller wrote, "than any of my other pieces, and the performance gave me great pleasure. I feel that I am gradually mastering the secret of dramatic art." But the play had its weak points. It conceded too much to popular and literary prejudice. It would be artistically better for the omission of the generous, but rather romantic love of Bertha and Rudenz. The killing of Gessler, too, is made less important to the liberation of the people than the imprisonment of Bertha, and might almost seem to have been unnecessary, while it was clearly justifiable; so that the spectator is needlessly rasped by the closing defence of an act that needs none. No one was likely to take Tell's deed as an indirect argument for regicide, and one resents the suggestion of such a possibility by the

introduction of John of Austria, the murderer of the emperor, as a contrasted figure to the executioner of Gessler. Indeed, Tell's horror at John's act is irritating to-day, and can hardly have been necessary in 1804, though of course at that time an appeal to patriotic revolt against foreign tyranny had a direct application to Germany, then under the heavy yoke of Napoleon and on the eve of her deepest humiliation. Thus "Tell" struck a patriotic chord, whose vibration silenced every criticism and explains an enthusiasm that thrilled all Germany. No German drama before or since has ever produced so deep or so lasting an impression.

Perhaps it was this patriotic spirit in "Tell" that now brought Schiller a serious invitation to become a pensioner of the court of Berlin, which he visited with his family while the drama was in the hey-day of its first success. They were cordially received by Frederic William and the gentle Luise, and Lotte was charmed with the condescension that admitted her children to the high honor of playing with the little prince who was to become the first German emperor. But they had now no wish to change their home. Still, the invitation brought him a welcome increase of salary at Weimar, though but little time was left him to enjoy it. For on his return he was prostrated by illness, and was never strong again. He lingered, however, for many months, and his long agony was not ended till May of the next year.

During this last period Schiller did little, except to sketch and partly elaborate a drama of Polish and

Russian life, "Demetrius," which shows, even in its unfinished condition, that his power of tragic conception and execution was unabated, perhaps was at its very highest, when he was taken in his prime (May 9, 1805). It is a curious coincidence that, as with his fellow-poet, Goethe, his last conscious wish should have been for "more light."

In his "Epilogue to the Song of the Bell," Goethe gives us a key to the right understanding of Schiller's place in literature, when he makes it his essential nature to rise above the commonplace by which the mass of mankind is fettered.[1] Elsewhere he says that though Schiller "had the fortune to pass for a special friend of the people, he was more of an aristocrat than I." He lived largely in the realm of ideals. The common things of life; the noise of children, the visits of strangers, irritated him. He was never, like Goethe, a man of the world, on whom social duties sat easily. There was a certain characteristic artificiality in his daily life and methods of work. He liked close rooms, he found the smell of decaying apples stimulating, and a rosy light from red curtains helpful in composition. He worked much at night and under the stimulus of coffee, while Goethe preferred the morning hours, and wrote by preference in the open air. Schiller's long invalidism may excuse some eccentricity in these regards, — the more as his family life seems to have been most

[1] Und hinter ihm, in wesenlosem Scheine,
Lag was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine.
(Stanza 4, last couplet.)

happy and unclouded, and full of hopeful cheerfulness, while his literary life was guided always by unselfish faith in the power of truth and beauty to win its way.

In early life Schiller had been a social iconoclast. In his prime his influence was rather fructifying, refining, emancipating, — in language, in art, and in social and political life. The effect of his work on the German language has been lasting. His influence on literary taste and production ceased very largely with his generation. He was not, like Goethe, a power for the whole coming century, with the roots of his creative genius so deep in the immutable nature of man as to be "not of an age, but for all time." His idealism is more and more difficult of comprehension to the realistic spirit of our modern life which gains an ever firmer hold on the work of Goethe. The easy flow of his lyrics rouses a cold admiration. They lack Goethe's winning naïveté and the flashing keenness of Heine. At times there seems to have been danger that Schiller would become a poet of the school room. But to make him that alone would do grievous injustice to the battle he fought, and the victory he contributed in no small measure to win, for those ideals of truth and beauty to which he dedicated his life. And, though our credence in these should be outworn, the fruit of his inspiring friendship in the rich aftermath of Goethe's productivity should secure him a grateful and enduring memory.

CHAPTER IX.

RICHTER AND THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

Jean Paul Friedrich Richter was born in 1763, and was thus four years younger than Schiller, whom, under more favorable circumstances, he might have rivalled in influence, as he certainly did in originality of genius. But destiny placed him apart, and gave him so eccentric a development that what was grand in him seemed sometimes grotesque, and this could not but limit his power for good on the German people and their literature.

Richter was the son of a poor pastor in the mountain district of the Fichtelgebirge, and his youthful environment tended to make him solitary, puritanic, and pedantic. In dire poverty and with desperate enthusiasm, he studied first at Hof, then in Leipzig, whence he was obliged to flee to escape his creditors. Unfortunately, he could not shake off as easily the pernicious spiritualism of Fichte's philosophy that he had learned there. It is to this metaphysical bias that we may justly trace his contempt of form and rule, his strangely nebulous religious faith, his somewhat peculiar notions of love, and the liberality with which he shared his heart among

his many female admirers in the hey-day of his fame.

While in Leipzig, Richter wrote an essay on "The Religions of the World." Here the young pastor's son upholds the genial theory that, as each race had developed the religion best suited to it, so the Germans were then gradually developing Christianity to the higher plane of Natural Religion. At the close, he prophesies that "the glorious dawn that is rising over our religious teaching announces a yet more glorious day, and is but a weak image of the sun that will shine for our descendants."

Another literary work of this student period, his Satires, were too grim to be popular. They brought him nothing in money, nor immediately in fame. Their fierce spirit suggests Quevedo or Swift. A few sentences may suffice to indicate their embittered character. An aristocrat, he says, "reflects the fame of his ancestors as a mud-puddle does the sun." The theologian "can very seldom serve his neighbor because he must always serve God. He is so holy that he has no need to be virtuous [a hit at Luther's theory of good works]; and hence he falls more rarely into the splendid than into the sordid vices of the heathen." "Those who are repairing the road to heaven have the least time to travel on it." "He who carries the lantern stumbles more readily than he who follows." "The Catholics have fasting diet, the Protestants fasting sermons. These hallow their bellies by emptiness, those their brains." Other passages, and the strongest are among them, will hardly

bear citation. It is right to remember, however, that he is writing in and of the decade that preceded the French Revolution, and of a class whose presumption Lessing had been obliged to scourge into silence only a few years before. But he hits on all sides; telling us, for instance, how "Jews despise certain animals as much as they imitate them."

Later on, when preparing a new edition of these Satires, he said: "The author at that time enjoyed the most beautiful things of life, — autumn, summer, spring, with their landscapes in earth and sky, — but he had nothing to eat or put on." This may account for their bitterness. But the worst was soon over for him: he was made a teacher at Schwarzenbach; and this bit of sunshine, joined with the society of several bright young ladies from the neighboring Hof, — his "erotic academy," he called them, — was reflected immediately in the healthier humor of that delicious pedagogical idyl, "The life of the Happy Little Schoolmaster, Maria Wuz" (1790), the first thoroughly characteristic product of his pen. That it lacked all grace of form or style was less felt at that time, while the pranks of the "Storm and Stress" were still fresh in men's minds, than it would have been after Goethe had revived a classical taste. On the other hand, it was clear that the writer had genius and keen wit, and the book won its way to immediate and great popularity. "He who has written 'Wuz' is immortal," the critic Moritz wrote to him (1792); and indeed we find here the promise of Richter's best work in æsthetics

and pedagogy, and a democratic spirit more genuine than Rousseau's.

He was thus led to a bolder effort, "The Invisible Lodge" (1793), a fanciful tale of an idealized Free-Masonry, betraying more than any other of his works the influence of Goethe, though, unlike that serene master, Richter got so tangled in his plot that the story appeared at last as a fragment (1792); but even in this form, its descriptions of nature, and scenes of emotion and sentiment, won for it a success that encouraged its author to move to Hof, where he might be more in touch with such intellectual life as the high-school there would afford. The result of this was seen in "Hesperus" (1795) where all the virtues, but also all the faults, of "The Invisible Lodge" were magnified. Formlessness rises here to an art, and approaches the labyrinthine eccentricities of "Tristram Shandy." All sorts of digressions interrupt the narrative, with the slenderest excuse, or even with none at all. The crudeness of style has become a mannerism, as marked as Carlyle's. On the other hand, his power of emotional description has become greatly deepened and refined. All the delicate shades that separate the first dawn of love from its passionate expression are caught with wonderful discrimination; and the lovers of "Werther," to whom Goethe had proved unfaithful, found in Jean Paul a new idol after their own hearts.

Indeed even Goethe was hardly so enthusiastically loved by women as Jean Paul for his "Hesperus."

But in spite of their love and of the influence they exercised on his work, Richter was too much an egoist to feel in himself that which his "erotic academy" had taught him to analyze so well. The sentimentality in "Hesperus" is simply stupendous. In theory, his love was to be wholly platonic. "I do not want the fairest face, but the fairest heart. I can overlook all spots on that, but none in this." "He does not love who *sees* his beloved, but he who *thinks* her." His heroes delight to exchange their thoughts on God and immortality in graveyards and the silence of night. "Give me two days, or one night, and I will fall in love with whomever you choose," says Viktor in "Hesperus." And love to him has so little personal or individual about it that he can write, "If the first kiss does not end love, the second, at most, will be its death." All this in theory. In practice, he flutters like a butterfly from flower to flower, and invents for his inconstancy such pretty names as "simultaneous love," "loving together," "loving at once," "general warmth," "universal love," or, with a flight to more congenial Italy, "*tutti* love." Nay, he even makes it a rule "never to sacrifice one love to another." We have evidence of six more or less serious attachments during the composition of "Hesperus." But aside from these social vagaries, this novel contains some very keen and good-humored satire. The German housewife reveals herself to us "stitched out, boiled out, washed out," many little deceits dear to feminine hearts are laid bare, and, in more serious vein, the finger is placed

on the political sores of Germany, though no prescription follows the diagnosis.

Of the outward conditions under which the "Hesperus" was written, Doering, his first biographer, thus informs us: "Richter's study and sitting-room offered about this time a true and beautiful emblem of his simple yet noble mind, which took in both high and low. While his mother, who lived with him, bustled about her housework at stove or table, he sat in a corner of the same room at a plain writing-desk, with few or no books at hand, but only one or two drawers with excerpts and manuscripts. . . . Pigeons fluttered in and out of the chamber." It is a pretty picture, and adds significance to Richter's beautiful words: "Unhappy is the man whose own mother has not made all other mothers venerable." It helps us to understand, too, how his work came to be so full of odds and ends, so scrappy. Poverty had hindered him from buying many books; he had early formed a habit of copying out what he wanted. These drawers of excerpts left their mark on his style.

Less ambitious than "Hesperus" were Jean Paul's next efforts, — "Quintus Fixlein" (1796), and "Siebenkäs." The latter, translated into English under the sub-title, "Flower, Fruit, and Thorn Pieces," is a strange plea for the emancipation of genius from the laws of custom, or civil society, while the former is an idyl of family life, and perhaps at present the most read of his works. "Quintus Fixlein," like "Wuz," is a tale of education, and in a measure auto-

biographical. Here the satire is directed against philological pedantry. Fixlein, ambitious of authorship, proposes to make a study of misprints in German books, and of other equally laborious and fruitless subjects, in the course of which he defends the use of Latin for scholarly conversation, because the Romans of all classes used it on every occasion. But Quintus is very human. He takes off his hat as he passes under the windows of aristocracy; he preaches longer than usual, that he may be sure to find his soup smoking hot on his return home. He has a spice of superstition too. His marriage, with the visit of the bridal pair to the graves of the loves that have gone before, is the fantastic gem of the book. But with all this, there is a strong under-current of democratic protest. "All sins," he had said in "Siebenkäs," "arise from poverty, but there are joys and virtues in every class. Therefore, fiction should paint joy in poverty."

Jean Paul's popularity now brought him invitations from Weimar, Berlin, and other courts, but his visits there were of surprisingly little value to him. Already he had made some effort to study his great contemporaries; but it is significant that this perverse genius should have been most attracted by Schiller's "Ghost-Seer," — precisely that work of his which least attracts any one else. He went to Weimar in 1796. He found Wieland warm in his admiration; and Frau von Stein, estranged from Goethe since his connection with Christiane, seemed to hope for some satisfaction to her wounded vanity by nurs-

ing the fame of a promising rival to Goethe in popular favor. But on the other hand, Schiller and Goethe had won their way to clear æsthetic conceptions, to a union of the classical with the German spirit; they had fought the battle of the "Xenien" with the unruly spirits of the "Storm and Stress," and with the placid philistinism of Nicolai. They were in no humor to commend the genial extravagance of Jean Paul. His popularity seemed to them a menace to the good cause of German culture, just as Schiller's had seemed to Goethe some years before. Each felt foreign to the other. Schiller said Richter seemed to him like a man who had fallen from the moon. On the other hand, Jean Paul writes of Schiller's portrait: "His nose struck me like lightning. It shows a cherub with the germ of the fall. It seems to exalt itself above everything, — above men, misfortune, and morals. I cannot take my eyes from this lofty face, to which it seems to be indifferent whose blood flows, others or its own." And again he says: "Yesterday I met the rock-bound Schiller, against whom, as against a cliff, all strangers are dashed back." An anxious chill ran through Richter also, he tells us, as he entered Goethe's "palatial hall." "At last the god steps in, cold, monosyllabic, with no expression in his voice. . . . The figure is strong and fiery, his eye alight, but with no pleasant color." Yet when the titan read aloud "Alexis and Dora," it was "deep thunder mixed with light pattering rain," and "his heart shot flames through the icy crust." There was a side of Goethe's universality to which

Richter felt akin, but he distrusted his "unrouged" infidelity, doubtless prompted thereto by Herder, and he returned to Hof, unable to adapt himself to the world or to his times. He came back to Weimar, however, in 1797; and went thence to Leipzig and Berlin, where he was much admired by many women and engaged himself at last to a charming Berlin girl, Caroline Mayer. His position at the time is indicated by the fact that Queen Luise of Prussia was the first to honor their betrothal with a gift. Richter was married in May, 1801, and, after three years' wandering, settled in Bayreuth in 1804.

Significant in this connection is a passage from the preface to "Fixlein": "I could never find out but three ways to be happier, — not happy. The first way leads upward, and is to get out above the cloud of life so far that one sees the whole outer world, with its wolf-dens, charnel-houses, and lightning-rods lie far beneath our feet like a shrivelled child's-garden. The second is to fall right down into the garden, and to nestle one's self so comfortably in a furrow that, when one looks out of one's warm lark's-nest, one sees also no wolf-dens, charnel-houses, and poles, but only the ears of grain, each of which is, for the nestling bird, a tree and a shelter from sun and rain. The third, finally, which I take to be the hardest and shrewdest, is to change between the two." The idea of purifying the charnel-house, of setting up the lightning-rod, or of clearing the wolf's den was and remained foreign to this delightful but unpractical man.

This is clear from his next novel, "Titan" (1800–1803), which he says is "my principal work and most complete creation. My whole being, with its virtues and faults, and the ideals of my soul are contained in it." His solution for all the problems of nature and society is God and immortality. "Titan" is force struggling with the divine harmony. Hence, as he observes, the book should rather be called "Anti-Titan," for it is ostensibly directed against the "storm and stress" of irregular genius. It purposes to show that idealism in thought and feeling must be mingled with realism if the thinker is to take an active part in the world. But this is precisely what Jean Paul fails to show, and the impracticability of his hero illustrates his own.

Much the same might be said of the more popular "Flegeljahre" (1804–1805). Here a large part is clearly from his own experience, and some passages recall the severest of the early satires. Thus he speaks of a certain theological professor whose "stale lecture-room philosophy and theological half-knowledge, is one quarter moral, one quarter unmoral, one quarter intelligible, one quarter distorted, and the whole stolen." In the story, twin brothers, Walt and Vult, that is, Love and Knowledge, represent the contrast between the dreamy and the practical, both with a good deal in them of Richter himself, — "opposite magnets, they are continually drawn to each other, but when they meet are thrust asunder as by positive and negative electricity." The whole shows the influence of "Wilhelm Meister" more than any

other work of Jean Paul. It was never finished, for his imagination was always quicker to bind knots than to loose them. This really is of small consequence, however. No one ever read the "Flegeljahre," nor any other book of Jean Paul to study the development of plots or characters. One reads him as one reads Sterne, for the charming descriptions, humorous observations, and the delicate fancy that plays over all.

After the "Flegeljahre" Richter's talent begins to flag. He had no longer the spur of necessity to keep active his mind and pen. He gives us nothing more in the field of pure imagination that one is not glad to forgive and forget. But in these years he was to make valuable contributions to pedagogy, æsthetics, and politics. The "Levana" (1807), a group of disconnected essays on education, begins with a study of the will, love, and religion. Then we find a digression on the beginning of mankind and of education, then sections on games and physical culture, and then a delightfully witty "Appendix" on the "Ideal Master of Ceremonies." There follows a discussion of the education of princes and of women, for whose mis-culture under the prevalent German conditions he had only words of indignant protest. "Do I not see every week," he had written long before, "how souls are sacrificed so soon as they inhabit a female body? Since, then, the richest and most gifted souls, . . . if single, are disdained by society, what wonder if they sink into the sheltered citizenship of marriage; . . . and if the husband is a gentle jailer

the poor soul feels her lot supremely happy. . . . Sometimes, when a long buried idol of her once devout heart, or sad music, or a book, casts a warm ray on the winter sleep of her heart, she starts, looks around, and says: 'Once it was otherwise with me — long ago. I think I might have erred then' — and sleeps again." And in another place he says: "Prejudices that are flowers for us are thistles for you. Your teachers, companions, even your parents, trample and crush the little flowers you shelter and cherish. Your hands are more used than your heads. They let you play only with your fans. Nothing is pardoned you, least of all a heart."

The fundamental principles of this part of the "Levana" are that "Nature intends woman immediately as mother, only mediately as wife," and that "Love is the life-spirit of the female soul, the mainspring of her nerves." She is to be "the Vesta of the home, not the Oceanid of the universal sea." Her most exalted calling is the training of her children. Girls should study natural history, astronomy, mathematics, and English. To these he regrets that they must still add French, so as to be prepared, as he maliciously says, for the quartering of French troops. Richter returned often to this topic, and concludes his last allusion to it with the beneficent exhortation that "men should show more love, women more common-sense."

The closing chapters of "Levana" seem to promise a more logical development. But even in its unfinished state it aroused great admiration. In pure

literature, form is essential, here it was not. Goethe "did not know how to say enough good" of the extracts he read, and found in them "a wonderful maturity" and "the boldest virtues, without the least excess." The praise is perhaps exaggerated; but the book, and especially the portion on the education of women, was of much value in Germany, and might still be of much more.

A high place must be given also to Richter's "Primary School of Æsthetics" (1805), which Carlyle pronounces "abounding in noble views, and notwithstanding its frolicsome exuberance, in sound and subtle criticism." But he adds the caution: "We fear it might astonish many an honest brother of your (the critics') craft were he to read it, and altogether perplex and dash his maturest counsels if he chanced to understand it." Perhaps the latter sentence is as true as the former. The work certainly contains some things hard to be understood, though it is said by those who think they understand it to be superior to similar studies by Lessing and Schiller. It is based on an enthusiastic study of Herder, with whose glowing eulogy it closes. The most original, and to many the most valuable and interesting portion, is the keen analysis of humor, closing with a praise of wit, which he happily compares to chemical solvents, for only bodies chemically freed can make new compounds; but wit dissolves ideas, and so by enabling them to combine in new forms, it is the father of originality. A chapter on style is more amusing than valuable, as we might expect, nor can it surprise

us to learn that the "Æsthetics" also remained a fragment.

The year after the publication of the "Æsthetics" Napoleon crushed the Prussian power at Jena. It is interesting to see how in the period of humiliation and foreign conquest Richter's mind was stirred to more practical activity than had yet characterized it. In 1805, he could still write: "Did I certainly know that Napoleon was wrong, and as certainly all just ways to resist him, then it were easy to risk with the pen even life against him. But this uncertainty cripples fearfully the courage of a cosmopolitan who must see aims through results." But when Jena had come he doubted no longer, though by the courtesy of Bernadotte he was personally spared many of the annoyances of the French occupation. During all this period he forms a patriotic contrast to Goethe, who, as Knebel wrote to Richter, found this a favorable time for studying osteology, "since every field was strewn with specimens." We have tried to explain Goethe's position. Richter's is more fortunate in needing no explanation. His "Twilight Thoughts for Germany" (1809) and "Fast-Sermons during Germany's Martyr-Week" (1810–1812) were bold in their denunciations of Napoleon and the German sycophants who betrayed their nation to flatter him. And even higher civic virtue was shown in the "Fast Sermons" of 1817, which held up to scorn those German princes who had bought the popular support that restored them to their thrones with fair promises that they had no thought to fulfil. We can hardly

realize now the boldness that dictated such words as these : " There are critical times in the political sky, decisive points for states. Let these times be held sacred. Such a time there was in Greece . . . after the victory over Xerxes ; such a time is working now in Germany after our victory over the new Xerxes. We are rid of the bitter past, but we are not masters of the ripe fruit-bearing future. Public spirit and sense for the commonweal must be nursed in the people, and that must be done by satisfying that spirit; the people must receive the higher good of free government in order to become afterward worthy of it. Only a parliament, I repeat, a parliament, can rouse the people to a public spirit." " Cultured peoples are by culture itself protected by a double shield against tyranny."

This was said in a time of political reaction, when the boldest were silenced, exiled, or imprisoned. It showed that the misfortunes of Germany and the glories of the War of Liberation had roused in Richter that practical sense, that realism, which contact with the great master of German objective literature had not stirred. How different might have been his place had these political changes taken place in his youth. They found him capable of enlarged ideas, but rooted in a narrow past. He could not begin life anew. His style remained as hopelessly quaint as ever, and this made him a sealed book to coming generations, who had little patience with fantastic dreaming, however beautiful. It is for this reason that he had no imitators. There was nothing in his work

worth imitating but his genius, and genius defies imitation.[1]

In the latter years of his life Richter travelled much, visiting Heidelberg, Stuttgart, and Munich. Everywhere he was received with distinguished honor. Among his latest works the "Evergreen of the Feelings" is one of the shortest, and perhaps also the best. The "Comet," his last and wildest novel (1820–1822), opens with the strange confession that hitherto he has yielded too much to rules of art, "like a child born curled and forced straight by a swathing cushion." But now he proposes to let himself go; and a wonderful crazy tale he makes of it, full of wild, but often very comic fancies.

Mental and physical disease troubled Richter's last years. Already, in 1817, he writes of the "twilight of his life and death." His friends were passing away, and gloom was added to pain by partial blindness. He died on the 18th of November, 1825. On the second of that December, Ludwig Börne, who, perhaps, of all the following generation stood intellectually closest to him, pronounced in the Museum at Frankfort a funeral oration, which is his most glorious monument, and indeed one of the masterpieces of German eloquence. "A star has sunk," he said, "and the eye of this century will close before it appears again, for bright genius circles in wide orbits, and our late descendants will first bid joyous welcome

[1] Paul Nerrlich, in his "Jean Paul, sein Leben und seine Werke" (1889), calls Richter "the predecessor of Börne and Heine," it is hard to see why.

to him from whom their grieving fathers once took sad leave. We will mourn for him whom we have lost, and mourn, too, for those others who have not lost him, for he did not live for all. Yet a time will come when he will be born for all, and then all will bewail him. But he stands patient at the door of the twentieth century, and waits smiling until his creeping people come to meet him."

This is an eloquent vision, but we are approaching that twentieth century, and we cannot feel that we are approaching nearer to Richter. Rather we should say that Jean Paul remains a phenomenon of literary isolation, in his development as in his prime. Very popular with multitudes for a considerable period, still highly prized by a few, his work is without notable influence on the currents of German literature, much more so than that of the far less talented men to whom we now turn our attention, the founders of the Romantic School.

Historically the Romantic School carries us back to Berlin and to that Nicolai, once the intelligent friend and patron of Lessing, but who, unfortunately, seemed capable of learning only from him, and after his death saw nothing but retrogression in the progress of Herder, Schiller, and Goethe, while he was meantime fighting valiantly for what he mistook to be Lessing's critical ideas, preaching a philosophy of such dreary sobriety and common-sense as to earn for himself the name, Goliath of the Philistines. By his extreme views Nicolai gradually provoked a re-

volt among his own disciples, who sought shelter first with Herder, then under the banner of Schiller and Goethe. But they could not follow them in the classical renaissance which their combined labors attempted, and so these hot-headed recruits set up a school of their own, with an attempt at new literary principles, which their inventors, Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel, called Romantic.

Not indeed as though they broke, or could break, wholly with the past. It has been shown once and again [1] that they did but transplant into other soil seeds sown by Winkelmann and Lessing, Klopstock and Wieland; that Schiller's æsthetic theories, Goethe's poetry, and Herder's appreciation for foreign literatures never ceased to be powerful among them, more, perhaps, than the Romanticists suspected, for they proclaimed themselves innovators and radical reformers of literature.

The true relation of this whole movement to Goethe and Schiller has been most clearly apprehended by Hettner, who shows, in his book on the Romantic School, that both shared in the error of supposing that a true poetry could be artificially created in an unpoetic age, that poetry did not have its source in its time and environment, but could venture to defy them. The common basis of the Romantic School and of the Classicists is idealism, but this idealism may be subjective or objective. Goethe, and to a less

[1] For instance, by Gervinus and J. Schmidt, in their histories of German literature, and by Hettner and Haym in their special works on the Romantic School.

degree Schiller, were objective, and in so far they were realists; the Romanticists abandoned reality wholly. They did not seek to create from it, but they set the imagination to overcome it. This struggle is their whole history as a school. From this comes their inclination to the Middle Ages and the East, as the natural opposites to plastic and realistic antiquity. In the national life of their own time, neither they nor any one else could find poetic inspiration.[1] In teaching that art was independent of nature, Schiller confessed the idealist principle, and Goethe followed in this path for a time, just as earlier, in "Werther," he had echoed the subjective idealistic revolt against the sane objectivity which conforms to the order of the world. To that serener vision the Italian journey ultimately brought Goethe, but "he remained alone on the solitary height."[2] Richter is here at one with the Romanticists, but he is healthier than any of them, always opposing the real to the ideal in sharp, irreconcilable contrast, while "Wilhelm Meister" had put the reconciliation of the ideal with reality as the goal and summit of all culture; and at the other extreme, Schlegel thought the "Märchen" the only natural form of fiction, because it alone was wholly divorced from nature and reality.

[1] So Schiller says: "Ah, noch leben die Sänger, Nur fehlen die Thaten die Lyra Freudig zu wecken."

[2] Goethe's period of art independent of nature is represented by the "Achilleis," "Pandora," "Die Natürliche Tochter," and the "Allegories."

It is difficult to define precisely the aim of the Romanticists. One of themselves said that it was "to put sentimental material in fantastic form." In their protest against Classicism, they were led to exalt unduly the idea over its form, which in each case was to adapt itself to the idea, and, in this Protean condition, might defy all rule and criticism save the purely subjective. Here fancy is law, chaos order. The idealism of Fichte and Schelling takes the place of the white light of Spinoza's philosophy, and the healthy worldly wisdom of Goethe. "Fichte's 'Wissenschaftslehre' was the hinge on which Classicism turned to Romanticism. . . . This remarkable man ranges himself as the last of the representatives of the older, and also at the head of the younger generation." By his teaching of philosophic egoism, Kant's rationalism was brought in touch with the imaginative literature of the time. From Fichte came the romantic "irony" that seemed to play with truth, and left the reader always uncertain of the real purpose of the writer; from Schelling came the mysticism; both of course more noticeable in the critics than in the novelists of the school, — in the Schlegels than in Novalis or the young Tieck. Probably no other people in Europe would have been so much affected by metaphysical considerations. No German of that time, however, felt himself complete without a philosophy of the world and of life. As Richter said, "The French held the kingdom of the land, the English of the sea, the Germans of the air." Philosophy fettered Richter. It was the cause of life

and the sentence to death of the Romantic School, which certainly did harm to the healthy development of German literature, whatever we may think of the influence of the corresponding philosophy on German thought. Eccentricity came to pass for originality; the wildest freaks of a sickly fancy were greeted with delight. One reads to-day with nauseated impatience what was once regarded with ecstatic admiration.

On the other hand, these men did much to direct attention, in Herder's spirit, to the beauties and strength of foreign literatures, both by translations and imitations, and, in so far as these crowded from view such phrase-twisters as Iffland and Kotzebue, the world had no loss to mourn. Better than all, we owe to them the impulse to the first study of the earlier German literature and life, which bore such noble scientific fruit in the philologists of the next generation, and, in its more popular manifestations, was a powerful factor in rousing the national spirit to shake off the yoke of Napoleon. But if for this patriots might thank them, they could not but disapprove their blind admiration for mediæval institutions, which led many of them to the bosom of the Roman Church. While the Romantic School contributed much to the revival of Christianity in Germany that marks the early years of this century, in politics their influence was decidedly reactionary, and that at a time when feelings were much embittered. This political aspect of the Romantic School emphasized the disfavor into which it could not but fall when the liberal cause became popular among the

educated of Germany. Indeed, the word, as it is used among journalists in that country to-day, has usually a political significance.

The chief followers of the Schlegels were Tieck, Novalis, Brentano, Eichendorff, Fouqué, and Hoffmann. It is not necessary to our purpose to examine their work in detail, but it is important to a right comprehension of Heine, the last great name in German literature, that one should not ignore this significant phase of the literary life of Germany during the last thirty years of Goethe's life and the time of Heine's young manhood.

Wilhelm Schlegel, though least productive in pure literature, was, through his critical ability, the leader of the movement. Assimilating from Lessing his sound reason, from Herder his loving sensitiveness, he unites to manliness of judgment a feminine receptivity for the manifold forms of the beautiful. More sympathetic than Lessing, firmer than Herder, he exceeds both in objectivity and faithfulness.[1] But he was rather an illuminating than a constructive critic. To him and to Tieck, Germany owes a masterly translation of Shakspere. He was also the impresario of Madame de Staël's literary journeyings, and a pretty constant member of her household from 1802 to 1817, and so he influenced very materially the opinions of that great critic in her book on Germany, which was long an unquestioned authority both in France and England.

Perhaps more talented, and certainly more eccen-

[1] So Haym, Romantische Schule, 168.

tric, was Wilhelm's younger brother, Friedrich, who married Dorothea Veit, a daughter of Lessing's friend Mendelssohn, a lady who, as Schlegel assured a friend, "had no sense for anything in or out of the world but love, music, wit, and philosophy." A significant climax. This may help to explain why she had procured a divorce from her former husband in order to marry the talented but perverse critic.[1] For Friedrich Schlegel had a real passion for singularity, and placed himself in opposition to all existing notions of æsthetics or morals, both in the drama "Alarkos" and in his novel "Lucinde," which he describes as a Sapphic poem, and "the most artistic of all works of art that we have." What he means by this appears early in the work itself, where he declares: "For me and for this work, for my love for it and for its formation, no purpose is more purposeful than this, that I destroy in the very beginning what we call order, separate it entirely from it, take to myself frankly the right of a charming confusion, and assert my right by my action." But his brother, and a considerable section of the public, did not scruple to call the book "a foolish rhapsody."[2] Intrinsically, the "Lucinde" is not worth study, or

[1] August Schlegel was also twice divorced, and indeed for a time divorce threatened to become epidemic among the Romanticists.

[2] This is gentle criticism of a book whose hero is at once actor and critic, speaking now as Lucinde's lover, now as the author of a narrative, which is itself interrupted by letters, sensuous reflections, and "metamorphoses," a cynical chapter on the philosophy of propagation. The whole ends with what is fitly called "Sports of Fancy" (Tändeleien der Phantasie).

even mention. It is planless, and, in spite of its shameless autobiography, dull. Other Romanticists were at the time more popular. But it had considerable influence on the development of modern fiction, for it was one of the first and most extreme of a long series of novels that preached the "emancipation of women," and the general lawlessness that this position seemed to involve.

Disappointed in Germany, Schlegel went to Paris, turned Roman Catholic, and made studies in Sanskrit that mark a new epoch in the science of Comparative Philology. Though he returned to Germany in 1808, his literary work was afterward insignificant. His real importance in this field is confined to a few years, and largely to the critical journal "Das Athenæum," which he founded in opposition to the "heavenly twins" of Weimar. It was left for Tieck and Novalis to practise what the Schlegels had preached.

Tieck was born in Berlin (1773), and was the first of her sons to distinguish himself greatly in literature. He studied in Halle, Erlangen, and Göttingen, and while there wrote student-songs destined to outlive his riper work. On his return to Berlin, he began writing novels for the publisher Nicolai, whose comic side tickled Tieck's satiric fancy, and led him over, towards the close of the century, to the open arms of the Schlegels, — a desertion that provoked Nicolai the more because he had been betrayed into publishing himself Tieck's keenest satire on his own critical theories, "Bluebeard, a Nursery Tale in Four Acts" (1797).

The next butt of Tieck's satire was the voluminous platitudes of Kotzebue and other imitators of the worn-out period of "Storm and Stress." But "Puss in Boots" had neither the earnestness nor the passion to make it more than a plaything of fancy; and indeed this fault followed him through life, even after he broke with the principles of the Romantic School, and, with occasional relapses, became essentially realistic. So that, although he had studied Goethe from boyhood, and made "Wilhelm Meister" the model for his popular artist romance, "Sternbald's Wanderings" (1798), he never became master of his genius, but let it guide him where it would. The realistic grasp of life that made the strength of "Meister" was lacking to all the Romanticists. We see this in the artificiality of Tieck's characters, and in the loosening of social ties which is thus proclaimed by Sternbald's teacher, Florestan: "The proprieties of your common prosaic life are not permissible in art. In these pure regions they are unseemly; they are, between ourselves, the document of our vulgarity and immorality." According to this artist's philosophy, it is not possible to forget one's purpose, because "an intelligent man so orders his life as not to have any." This is certainly true of the characters of Tieck's story. Whether they are "intelligent" (vernünftig) or not, its readers must decide. This may serve to show why, though many read Tieck for pastime, his work, especially in this earlier romantic period, lacks claim to a permanent place in literature, and was indeed dead before his death.

Far more fanciful and mystic than Tieck had ever been was Friedrich von Hardenberg, commonly called Novalis. He had, to be sure, the excuse of a great tragedy in early life, — the death of his betrothed. Hence sprang those "Hymns to the Night," which, in the opinion of a German critic,[1] are "deeply thoughtful notes, full of lament, and melancholy rapture, and burning pain, which can be compared with nothing that our classical literature has produced;" perhaps, we may add, because nothing in classical literature could, in the nature of the case, be so morbidly sentimental or so sentimentally morbid. He had nursed this disease on Fichte's theory of the will, and read industriously Young's "Night Thoughts," — far inferior efforts in the same sickly kind. But let Novalis speak for himself. He will tell us how, when "the inspiration of night, the slumber of heaven," came over him, "the hill became a misty cloud. Through the cloud I saw the transfigured features of my love. In her eyes rested eternity. I seized her hand, and the tears became a sparkling, unbroken chain. Millenniums passed off into the distance like thunder-clouds. On her neck I wept enrapturing tears at my new life."

All this is very pretty, and so is his wish "to keep his wound forever open," to turn from this vulgar day of ours and live in "the holy, mysterious, hundred-eyed night," which he who had once enjoyed would never exchange for light, that hurries to its end "in eternal restlessness." But alas for poor

[1] Haym, Romantische Schule, 336.

human nature! — or shall we rather say, thanks to human nature? — having indited these hymns, he soon found another maid to his mind, as well as the congenial literary society of Tieck and the Schlegels. His next enthusiasm was for the new Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III., who, according to Novalis's loyal hopes, was to bring a golden age, and, as we know, actually brought the disgrace of Jena, and the greater disgrace of the broken promises of the Holy Alliance. His new patriotism was as unreasoning as his old affection. "One must live in the State as in one's beloved," he says. "The greater the taxes, the greater the needs of the State, the more perfect the State," and the more worthy of affection. His conversion was thorough; his ideal, "one lord, one family." The king is for him "a man exalted to be an earthly fate;" and to be an official at his court is "the brightest festival of a lifetime, a cause for life-long enthusiasm." As for Queen Luise, she fills the poet "with a holy glow, and tunes the lyre to soft, heavenly melodies."[1] When Germans remember the weak, faint-hearted, vacillating man who roused such dithyrambic enthusiasm, it is difficult to think with patience of the gentle Novalis.

Natural science now began to interest him much, after his way; not that he would learn about plants and insects, but rather "that they might show me the way where in deep sleep the maiden lies for whom my soul is yearning." In this frame of mind he wrote his first novel, "The Disciples of Sais," a

[1] Haym, l. c. 345.

sort of allegory of nature as a revelation of Fichte's *ego*, and not without value as a memorial of this age of scientific ferment. To Novalis "the secret of nature is nothing else than the fulfilled longing of a loving heart."

This mental state and the influence of Tieck naturally placed him in opposition to the worldly wisdom of "Wilhelm Meister." That Wilhelm should descend to being a useful member of a democratic society, when he might have been a poet, or even a transcendental philosopher and reformer, such as Fichte, was too much for Novalis. He resolved to correct this aspersion on German impracticability, and gave the world his "Heinrich von Ofterdingen," a novel whose influence on the reading pabulum of the uncultured masses has not yet ceased. Here Goethe's serenity is exchanged for dreamy enthusiasm, where we seem to move in a mild fairy land amid misty myths that lift at times to give us brief glimpses of reality, only to close suddenly again upon us. Novalis always means to be clear, but his eloquent and poetic fecundity is ever again tempting him to leave the earth and soar.

Infused with what its author calls "magical idealism," "Ofterdingen" becomes a sort of "mythology of history," realizing the definition that "romantic poetry consists in the pleasant art of surprising, of making an object strange and yet familiar and attractive," which is his rather vague literary creed. For the writer of "Ofterdingen" the real world does not exist. He lives in the dream and wonderland of his

fantasy. There is no terra firma here, but through it all the sweetest lyric and frostiest symbolism are mingled, until at last all flows together in one great, bottomless allegory.[1]

Novalis did not live to finish "Ofterdingen" nor to develop his theory. He died in 1800. "Ofterdingen" lived on, however. It is a tale of the Middle Ages, the favorite epoch of the Romanticists. The hero is a German poet, not wholly obscure, and Novalis tells us he meant the story to be "an apotheosis of poetry." Perhaps a plain, blunt man will better offer an extract than attempt a critical account, however brief, of this "apotheosis" that never "apotheosizes;" for the novel was abandoned after the beginning of the second part, withering because it had no depth of earth, no root in realism. Here is an extract from the very beginning: "The old people were asleep already. The clock ticked monotonously on the wall. The wind blustered on the rattling windows. Now and again the brightness of the moon lighted the room. The youth lay restless on his couch and thought of the stranger and his tales. 'T is not the treasures,' said he to himself, 'that have roused in me so unspeakable desire. Far from me is all greed. 'T is the Blue Flower that I long to behold. It lives ever in my heart. I can think and dream of naught else.'" The Blue Flower, we may explain, is "Poesy," and when he attained a morning vision of it, it showed a beautiful face, which he recognized later in Matilda, whom therefore he loved after

[1] Cp. Hettner, l. c. 84.

his kind. Let us listen to him. He is standing at the window. "Ye everlasting stars, ye silent wanderers, I call you to witness my sacred oath. For Matilda I will live, and everlasting faith shall unite my heart and hers. For me, too, the morn of an eternal day is dawning. The night is passed. I kindle myself as an inextinguishable sacrifice to the rising sun." This is the way the writers of our popular weekly story papers would write if they could, and it is the model in style for the back-stairs literature of feminine Germany, for what is called the "Colportage-roman," in ten pfennig parts, to-day. But in his and the next generation Novalis and his novel were the admiration of the aristocracy, and not in Germany alone. Carlyle, in commending German writers to English readers, selects Novalis as one whose "perusal and reperusal he could recommend with perfect confidence," — a curious comment on the shifting of popular taste. Nevertheless, individual passages in the novel are charming, and some of the lyrics interspersed in it are of permanent value. The style is always easy, often musical; and when Novalis condescends to bend his flight to earth the descriptions are admirably vivid; as, for instance, that of his hero's betrothal. But the kernel of the book, the "apotheosis of poetry," would hardly be regarded to-day as within the sphere of prose fiction.

The most extreme of the romantic novelists was Brentano, grandson of that Sophie von Laroche who had attracted Wieland and the young Goethe, and brother of Goethe's adoring Bettina von Arnim. His

"Godwi, or the Mother's Stone Image," out-heroded the "Lucinde" in its wild passion. One of the songs interspersed in it, "Zu Bacharach am Reine," itself meritorious, is the origin of Heine's famous "Lorelei." Some years after this he, with Von Arnim, had the happy inspiration to collect and publish what could be recovered of the old popular songs of Germany. This collection, "Des Knaben Wunderhorn," is, says Grisebach, "the most national of all our books, — a gospel of genuine poetry . . . everywhere a mirror of this world, of reality, and of a special nationality. . . . National virtues and national vices show themselves here; the pure and the impure is presented with equal naïveté, pagan joy of life, and the sweetest inspirations of Christianity." The book acquired immediately an immense national importance, which was reflected in the lyrics of the time, and so it both stimulated and aided the efforts of the patriots to restore a national life to their subjugated country. The rest of Brentano's work may be covered with the charitable mantle of oblivion, which might be stretched over Von Arnim, also, were it not that in his later years he, like Tieck, freed himself in some degree from Romanticism and in his unfinished novel, "Die Kronenwächter," gave so realistic a picture of the time of the Reformation that, were the work completed, it would perhaps be read with pleasure to-day.

A more enduring literary life than came to any of these men was the lot of Heinrich von Kleist, whose melodrama "Kätchen von Heilbronn" is still beloved

of the German middle class. Heinrich was of the old nobility, son of a Prussian officer, and had distinguished himself by patriotic activity during the Napoleonic rule. His dramas, the "Prince of Hamburg," and especially "Die Hermannsschlacht," reflect the fierce hate and bitterness of 1810. The latter was not put on the stage till 1875, when it achieved great success, due perhaps as much to its spirit as to its intrinsic merits. For this reason, too, there is a tendency at present to over-estimate Kleist in Germany, as though to atone for the too great neglect that he endured in his life, until he ended it by suicide, in 1811. His friend, Frau Henriette Vogel, shared his fate by request. There was a streak of insanity in many of the early Romanticists.

Among the younger followers of the school, who were usually but partial followers of its teaching, one may note Uhland (1787–1862), author of several popular ballads, who was related to the Romanticists rather by his mediæval tastes and studies than by his style, which is peculiarly graceful, easy, and precise. His patriotic and self-sacrificing political labors marked him as a man of action, and distinguished him from such day-dreamers as Novalis. Another partial ally of the Romanticists was the theologian Schleiermacher, who ingeniously applied their tenets to religion and placed its seat in the feelings.[1] Others whose names are still familiar were Eichendorff, who wrote the popular "Life of a Good-for-Nothing"

[1] "Schleiermacher," being translated, is "maker of veils," — not inappropriate in view of his relation to German theology.

and several pretty songs, and De la Motte Fouqué, the author of "Undine." Here, also, may claim a place Bettina von Arnim, whose "Correspondence of Goethe with a Child," in spite of its biographical pretence, may fairly rank as an original production. One may name also among the straggling followers of romanticism Clauren, whose sickly sentimentality Heine has made a by-word, and Hauff, whose "Lichtenstein" is still read with pleasure as an historical romance. But their influence did not outlast the great change that came over the German spirit in the next generation. The list may be closed with the erratic genius Hoffmann (1776–1822), who cultivated the weirdly bizarre, somewhat in the fashion of Poe. His absolute emancipation from all literary rule is the only tie that binds him to the old Romanticists; nor have these products of an unbalanced imagination any important place in the development of German fiction, for though his popularity called forth a plentiful crop of ghost and demon tales, none of his imitators added anything of value to literature.

So when Goethe died the Romantic School was even more a thing of the past than the classic realism against which it had rebelled. It was but an eddy in the literary current, so strong, indeed, that for a time some might have mistaken it for the current itself. Taking exclusively the idealistic side of Schiller and of the universal Goethe, they developed it in the only new direction that was left to them, and in doing this, they wrote the "mene tekel," the *reductio ad absurdum*, of pure idealism in literature.

For every great literature, and even every great literary work must have its roots deep in the heart of popular life if it is to create true "nurslings of immortality." It must draw its nourishment from the bosom of reality, not "dreaming like a love-adept" from the lips of the sleeping poet.

CHAPTER X.

HEINRICH HEINE.[1]

HEINRICH HEINE is called by Matthew Arnold "the continuator of Goethe;" he calls himself the last of the Romanticists. It is hard to define simply so complex a character; but however critics may differ as to what he was, all will agree that he is the only writer of primary importance with whom German literature has had to reckon since Goethe's death. Any effort to comprehend his peculiar genius will demand a sympathetic study of the conditions of his life and of the occasions that called forth the works by which he must be judged.

"Your grandfather was a little Jew and had a big beard," was the answer the inquisitive boy received to a question about his ancestry. The "little Jew" seems to have been in very moderate circumstances;

[1] Sharp's "Life of Heinrich Heine," 1880, contains a good bibliography of the earlier Heine literature, to which may be added: Von Embden, "Familienleben Heinrich Heines," translated by De Kay: "Family Life of Heinrich Heine," 1893. Some quite successful translations of Heine's lyrics are to be found in Hellman, "Lyrics and Ballads of Heine," etc., 1892. Attention may be called also to some private letters of Heine in "Revue Hebdomadaire," vii. 298, 614, and to the reminiscences by Garnier in "Revue Bleue," l. 267.

but all his sons made their way to a competence, and one of them, Solomon, Heinrich's uncle, became one of the wealthiest bankers in Hamburg. Heinrich's father was less successful, and takes but a small place in his life. His mother, Betty, as he called her, played the chief part in the history of his development. She was a literary woman, who read and prized Goethe, though she did her best to keep her son from the thorny paths of poetry. "She was health itself in reason and feeling. I did not get from her," he says, "my tendency to the fantastic and romantic." Rather we may say she was to him that Diana, who, with the French fairy Abunde and the fair Jewess, Herodias, appeared to him as controlling spirits in his "Atta Troll." To her we may trace the joy of life in his character, that spirit that made him kin to Goethe. The love of the son for the mother, even in his last days of long and racking illness, is the best witness to her sterling character. "Strange man," said his physician; "he thinks only of providing for his wife and of hiding his state from his mother."

Heine was born in Düsseldorf, December 13, 1799. It is a bit of humorous misstatement when he defers the date to January 1st, in order that he may call himself "one of the first men of the century." He was a rather precocious boy, and had hardly learned to read before he discovered the charm of "Don Quixote." "I was a child," he says in his delightful account of these early years, "and I knew nothing about the irony that God had put into his world, and

that the great poet had imitated in his little printed world, and I could shed the bitterest tears when the noble knight for all his nobility got only ingratitude and blows." A naïveté which never wholly deserted him in after life manifested itself amusingly in the boy who buried a pair of his long stockings expecting them to grow into breeches for his father.

He went to school at the Franciscan convent and afterward at the Lyceum, then a Jesuit academy; so that the Judaism of the family cannot have been very strict. He says he used to kiss the hand of every Capuchin monk that passed. "I was always a poet, and so the poetry that blooms and grows in the symbolism of Catholic dogma and worship naturally revealed itself to me more deeply than to others. . . . I often grew fervid for the highly blessed Queen of Heaven, and put the legends of her grace and goodness into pretty rhymes. My first collection of poems has traces of this fair Madonna period."

Probably all this is a little magnified by the mist of years, yet it shows an earnest side to the boy's life. But how shall we reconcile it with that other delicious tale of the same period where the French abbé, his teacher, "six times asked me the question: 'Heinrich, what is *der Glaube* in French?' And six times, and each time with a greater burst of tears, did I answer him: 'It is *le crédit.*' The seventh time, his face purple with wrath, the angry teacher cried: 'It is *la religion.*' And a rain of blows came down on me, and all the other boys burst out laughing. Never since can I hear *la religion* named without a shiver."

In addition to these Catholic influences, Heine was allowed, at fourteen, to attend lectures in French philosophy, and the result of it all was to make a skeptic of the young man before he had acquired any faith to lose. He often alludes to his school life in later works, usually with good-humored fun at the contrast between what he was set to learn and the needs of modern life. He tells us how he had to commit to memory the Roman kings, and dates, and the nouns that take *im* in the accusative, and the irregular verbs; "and this," he adds, gravely, "was very important, for if I had not learned by heart the Roman kings it would have been quite indifferent to me afterward whether Niebuhr had proved, or had not proved, that there never were any." It was lucky, he said, that the Romans did not have to learn Latin, else they would never have had time to conquer the world. "About Greek I won't say much; I should get too angry. The monks of the Middle Ages were not so wrong when they said it was an invention of the devil. God knows what I endured over it." With Hebrew it went better; but geography was discouraging, because the French conquests changed the boundaries every year, "and the lands all needed to be newly illuminated." Natural history had been a source of much pleasure to him, because in his acquaintances of later years he could recognize the apes, kangaroos, and rhinoceroses of which he had studied. In mythology "it delighted him to see with what gay nudity that pack of gods ruled the world." "I could have died for France, but I could not write

French verses." For music he had no taste, and he came to blows with his dancing-master.

So long as the French ruled Düsseldorf (1795–1801 and 1805–1814) the Jews enjoyed equal political rights there, and the young Heine seems never to have suffered from the race prejudice that is still strong in some parts of Germany. This he felt he owed to France. "To the friends of freedom," he says, "Napoleon appeared as a rescuer." He was eleven years old when he first saw (Nov. 2, 1810) the arbiter of Europe, riding down the main walk of Düsseldorf's court garden, "where it was forbidden to ride under five thalers fine." "The picture will never vanish from my memory," he said, years afterward. "I see him still, high on horseback, with those eternal eyes in his marble imperator face, quiet as destiny, looking down on the guards marching by; and the old grenadiers looked up to him in awful submission, stern accomplices, deathly proud: *Te, Cæsar, morituri salutant.*" For many years Heine had for Napoleon a kind of hero-worship, and he never lost his contempt for the Germans of the coalition that overcame the Titan at last.

With the patriotism of the War of Liberation (1814) Heine had therefore little sympathy. He thought "it contracted the heart, so that men learned to hate what was foreign, and in ceasing to be citizens of the world became only narrowly German." And indeed whatever of nobility there had been in the popular rising of that time was bitterly deceived and mocked by the faithlessness of the German princes.

Heine loved greatness, and the politics of the time showed only contemptible pettiness. No reproach belongs to him that he found small inspiration of patriotism in the thirty years that followed Waterloo.

His parents proposed to make a merchant of him. He had learned English and French, and was studying Italian. But just at this time he began to write poetry, true poetry, possibly first of all under the star of that Veronica of whom he speaks so tenderly in the *Reisebilder,* but whose identity none has yet been able to establish. Yet she seems something more than the play of a poet's imagination.[1]

But other loves soon busied his young fancy. Especially characteristic is his attachment for the executioner's daughter, Josepha, *Das rothe Sefchen,* the

[1] "Oh, God," he says, "once the world was so fair, and the birds sang thy eternal love, and little Veronica looked at me with her silent eyes, and we sat by the marble statue on the castle square — on one side is the old ruined castle where there are ghosts, and a lady in black silk, with no head, wanders about with a long, rustling train. On the other side is a high white building, in whose upper stories the bright pictures with their golden frames gleamed weirdly, and in whose basement so many great books were standing. I and little Veronica used to look at them often with curiosity when the good Ursula lifted us up to the great windows. Later, when I became a big boy, I climbed every day the highest rounds of the ladder and pulled down the tallest books and read in them so long that I feared nothing more, least of all headless ladies, and I got so clever that I forgot all the old games and stories and pictures and little Veronica, and even her name." Yet he did not forget, for to the end of his life he spoke with emotion of his "Little Veronica." "You can hardly imagine how pretty she looked as she lay in her little coffin," he says elsewhere, suggesting that this first boyish passion had a tragic end. Kohut, l. c. 52 ff., thinks that the "Reseda" (Mignonette) of early poems refers to her.

subject of several poems and of the most poetic episode in his Memoirs, in which occurs this pretty scene. He had asked Sefchen to show him the executioner's sword, and as she brought it she sang gayly the grim lines from the old ballad: —

> "Say will you hang on the lofty tree,
> Or will you swim in the deep blue sea,
> Or will you kiss the naked sword
> Given us by the dear Lord?"

And Heine answered with a lover's inspiration: —

> "I will not kiss the naked sword,
> I 'll kiss the ruddy Sefchen."

"And since for fear of hurting me she could not resist, she had to let me put my arms around her waist and kiss her pouting lips. Yes, in spite of the executioner's sword, with which a hundred poor scoundrels had been beheaded, and in spite of the ill repute that any connection with that dishonored race involved, I kissed the executioner's pretty daughter. I kissed her not merely out of tender inclination, but also out of contempt for the old social order and all its dark prejudices; and in that moment there blazed up in me the first flames of two passions to which the rest of my life was dedicated: love for fair women, and love for the French Revolution, — for that modern *furor francese* with which I was seized in the battle with the mercenaries of the Middle Ages," the reactionaries in politics and the Romanticists in literature. To the inspiration of Sefchen he afterward attributed the poems grouped under the title

"Traumbilder," some of which are very weirdly beautiful.[1] She was, he says, his lover's purgatory before he fell into love's hell.

With these feelings and memories, with the deepest love for his mother Betty and his sister Charlotte, Heine left home at sixteen to begin his business career at Frankfort-on-the-Main, whence he soon went to Hamburg (1816), where he made an attempt to establish an independent business two years later. But for this, and indeed for Hamburg, he found no taste. "The men of this city," he writes to a friend, "are all Jews, Israelites and Christians together. As for the women, laughing Cupid shoots too low for them, and, instead of their hearts, usually hits their stomachs." Here first he felt the race prejudice against the Jews, and also his own lack of sympathy with their commercial nature. And Hamburg brought him a still keener trouble in his hopeless love for his cousin Amalie, the rich banker Solomon's daughter, the Molly of the exquisite verses of this period, whose memory burned in his heart, though her name is found but once in his correspondence, and that eleven years later. Long afterward in Paris, his friend the French poet Gérard de Nerval said of him: "A hopeless youthful love slumbers still in the heart of the poet. When he thinks of it, he may weep even now, or else he presses back his tears in rancor. Heine himself has confessed to me that, after he lost this loving paradise, love remained only a

[1] Especially "Ein Traum gar seltsam trauerlich," "Nun hast du das Kaufgeld," and "Was treibt und tobt mein tolles Blut."

trade (*métier*) for him." It is certain that he gave himself up for a time to dissipation, and for this his frail constitution paid bitterly in after years. But it gave him no relief. Countless songs echo his passion. In the "Traumbilder," in "Junge Leiden," in the "Lyric Intermezzo," even in "Heimkehr," many years later, and especially in the "Buch le Grand" of the "Reisebilder," under all names and disguises, — Ottilie, Maria, Clara, Evelina, Agnes, Juliana, — his heart still throbs with Amalie's love.[1]

However much Heine might feel that his uncle had thwarted his affection, the young merchant was soon obliged to depend on the banker for material help. His own business venture failed in a crisis which cost his father also the greater part of his fortune, and it was decided that Heinrich should study law, at his uncle Solomon's expense, for three years. Thus the autumn of 1819 found him at the University of Bonn, whose examiners reported him as "ignorant of Greek, uncertain and unpractised in Latin, declining examination in mathematics, not without all knowledge of history, and showing zeal, though misdirected, in German composition," — surely no very brilliant start for a literary career.

At Bonn, Heine came under the powerful influence of Professor Wilhelm Schlegel, who was, he says, "with the exception of Napoleon, the first great man

[1] Two ladies of the literary group called "Jungdeutschland," Zianitzra and Dietz, have turned Heine's love into novels: "Heinrich Heine, der Liederdichter" (1864), and "Heinrich Heines Erste Liebe" (1870).

I had seen. I can still feel the holy thrill that went through my soul as I stood before his desk and heard him lecture." No doubt Heine was then perfectly honest in his admiration, though later he ridiculed it, and attacked Schlegel with much personal bitterness. To understand this apparent contradiction, it is well to consider at this point Heine's general relation to the Romantic School, though in doing so it may be necessary to anticipate somewhat the story of his life.

"The millennium of Romanticism has its end," says Heine in his "Romantische Schule," "and I myself was its abdicated fable-king. If I had not thrown the crown from my head and pulled on the workman's frock, they would certainly have beheaded me." But this ironical jest is hardly clear.

If under the name Romantic we are to understand that opposition to classic form and culture that Goethe, and with him Schiller, had striven to introduce into German literature, then Heine was not Romantic. If, on the other hand, we take Heine's own definition, that Romanticism stands for "the reawakening of the poetic spirit of the Middle Ages as it manifested itself in its songs, pictures, and buildings, in art and in life," we might say that he was really more Romantic than they who misunderstood the oracle they proclaimed. Already in 1820 he had written: "Christianity and Chivalry" in literature "are only means to free an entrance for Romanticism. Its flame has long been burning on the altar of our poetry, and no priest needs to pour

holy oil on it, and no knight needs to watch his arms by it. Germany is free. No priest can longer imprison German minds, no German princeling can longer scourge German bodies to forced labor, and so the German Muse should once more be a free blooming unaffected German girl, and no ecstatic nun, and no knightly maiden proud of ancestry." The national democratic protest that lay in the Romantic spirit was Heine's. In this sense he was a true and ardent patriot, but he was never a Chauvinist, as some of the chief Romanticists were proud to be.

Again he says: "A witty Frenchman," Charles Nodier, "once called me a disfrocked Romanticist. I have a weakness for anything that shows wit, and, ill-natured as the name was, it pleased me very much. It hits the mark. In spite of my exterminating campaigns against Romanticism, I was always really Romantic, and more so than I myself guessed. After I had dealt mortal wounds to the taste for Romantic poetry in Germany, there came over me once more an endless longing for the Blue Flower in the Romantic dreamland, and I seized the enchanted lute and sang a song," the romantic satire "Atta Troll," "in which I surrendered myself to all sweet exaggerations, all moonshine intoxication, all blooming nightingale folly. I know it was the last free wood-song of Romanticism, and I am its last poet. With me the old lyric school of Germany is closed, while the modern German lyric begins with me. This double importance will be attributed to me by German literary historians." (Geständnisse, viii. 9.)

Another characteristic that connects Heine with the Romanticists is his irony. With him it is, indeed, far more Greek than with the Romantic revivers of this "greatest of all licenses, the divine impudence of persistent self-parody," or, as Solger has more philosophically defined it, "the pain which seizes us when we see the most glorious thing sink into nothing through a necessity of its own being." Of this irony Heine himself says that "while the artistic school of Goethe praise it as a peculiar glory of their master, it is really a sign of our political lack of freedom." But perhaps in his case it is more true to say that it sprang from the incompatibility of two elements in his nature, the Hellenic joy of life such as inspired Goethe's "Roman Elegies," and the Hebrew earnestness nursed by the study of Hegel. Each seemed by turns to show him the emptiness of the other. He never succeeded in establishing a harmony between those antinomies of his character. Hence came a mocking spirit to which very little was sacred, and which Heine possessed in a higher degree than any writer of the century.

That Heine should have been Romantic in his youth was a natural result of his birthplace and early training. That school was then in its prime, and the Rhine country was precisely suited to cultivate the mediæval spirit. Nor did he ever free himself entirely from the religious side of these traditions. The same tendency that brought many of the Romanticists to the Roman Church brought him late in life, not indeed to any church, but to a trustful deism.

Yet whatever affiliations he might have with Romanticism he is right to assert that he gave it mortal wounds. "German Romantic Poetry," says Schuré, "was just celebrating her fairest days. A host of adorers pressed about her, each knight unfurled her colors in the race of literature and art. Kings smiled their applause, for the Romanticists strewed incense to them. Even diplomacy favored her, because she let the nations forget their thoughts of freedom. Then into the lists came a poet with brilliant fancy and sparkling wit, and proclaimed himself her most zealous knight. Unfortunately he discovered one day that he was breaking lances for a shrivelled old woman, instead of fighting for the charms of a blooming beauty. Red with rage, he flung his glove in her face, and dealt such fierce blows to all her knights that most of them never rose again, and the lady herself died of vexation. This undutiful son was Heinrich Heine."

While in Bonn, and under the influence of Schlegel and his disciples, Heine still wrote lyrics, and he was persuaded to attempt also a tragedy, "Almansor," but this was not finished when, that autumn, he exchanged Bonn for Göttingen, — a noted, though to him offensively aristocratic university, to which the opening paragraphs of the "Reisebilder" are an imperishable monument of satiric wit. Here more than ever he subordinated law to literature, but he had been only a few months in Göttingen when he was suspended for participation in a frustrated duel, and so he went to Berlin.

In his letters from the Prussian capital the rather sentimental though cheerful tone betrays the Romantic influence, and is in striking contrast to the sarcastic irony with which he treats that city eight years later in the "Reisebilder." In Berlin he came directly under the influence of Hegel, who was then supreme in literary circles, and the metaphysician had a permanent effect on the poet's mind, though he says that at the time he seldom understood him. Heine tells us, too, how one night he was standing with Hegel at a window, and in his poetic fancy called the stars the "home of the blessed." "Hm!" said the philosopher, "stars! Stars are only a bright eruption on the firmament." "What," said I, "is there then no happy spot where virtue is rewarded after death?' He glared at me with his pale eyes, and said, sneering, "So you want a reward because you have supported your sick mother and kept from poisoning your brother?" In after years he recalled how that lecturer "sat like a brood hen on the fatal eggs (of atheism), and I heard his cackling."

In Heine's immediate circle were several noted men, — Schleiermacher, Moser, Chamisso, Fouqué, and the novelist Alexis, who used to unite in a cultus of Goethe at the house of the talented Varnhagen and his genial wife, Rahel Marcus. Their admiration for Goethe was no doubt more enthusiastic than discriminating, but the close study of this master was of immense service to Heine, and can be traced in all his later work. When, however, in 1824, he made the popular pilgrimage to Weimar, he was hurt at Goethe's

condescension to him. He evidently felt that he was not appreciated, as indeed he could hardly have been at that time, and in his correspondence he writes more harshly than he afterward thought just "of the man," he explains, "but never of the poet."[1] For whatever he may say against Goethe, no year passes without a tribute to that overshadowing genius. It was at the very time of his bitterest attack that he wrote the already cited words, "Nature wished to see how she looked, and she created Goethe." Later he said: "Goethe with his clear Greek eye saw all in its true outlines and true colors, while we who were almost all sick were stuck far too deep in our morbid, disjointed, and romantic feelings, and could not see immediately how sound, unified, and plastic he showed himself in all his works." But of course Heine felt that he belonged to a new political era, and found little sympathy in the Olympian for his political aspirations. To Heine life was always a protest, first impatient and enthusiastic, then cynical and reckless, while Goethe was too far above social conventions to be irritated by them, and saw no gain to compensate him for political antagonisms. Thus Goethe roused in him the admiration of the poet and the indignation of the democrat, and this should explain the contradictions in Heine's expressed opinions of him.

[1] Especially in his review of Menzel's "Deutsche Litteratur." He did indeed say of Goethe's works that "they were barren, like all that is produced by art alone." But this was only a spiteful half-truth.

It is interesting in this connection to recall Goethe's estimate of the young Heine. "It cannot be denied," he said to Eckermann, "that he has many brilliant qualities, but he lacks love. He loves his readers as little as his fellow poets and himself. . . . In these last days I have read poems of his, and his rich talent is not to be denied; but, as I said, he lacks love, and so he will never have the effect he should have had. Men will fear him, and he will be the god of those who would gladly be negative as he, but have not the talent."

In Berlin Heine's literary genius blossomed under the sun of warm appreciation, and Rahel's friendship was a sustaining and refining power in his life. During 1820 he published unimportant letters in the Rhenish-Westphalian Advertiser, and at New Year he had succeeded in finding a publisher for a little volume of poems that had knocked in vain at such doors in Bonn and Leipzig. In this case the public showed better taste than their purveyors. The popularity of the book was immediate and great. For delicacy, fancy, condensation, originality, and depth of lyric expression, it was felt that a new power had risen in Germany. And yet not one of these youthful poems was light-hearted or joyful. Already it was said that he grasped the nature but not the purpose of poetry, already he was compared to Byron and to a fallen angel.

But even after this success he had still to seek a publisher for his dramas, and he found it a task that belonged "to the first stages of literary martyrdom."

"One could not bear it but for the hope of being received into glory at the end." Not much glory, however, was to be hoped from the two tragedies, "Almansor" and "Ratcliff," which with a "Lyric Intermezzo" composed this volume (1823). The poems indeed are still excellent, but "Almansor" is weak in diction, and "Ratcliff," though showing the influence of Scott, lacks smoothness, while both have the faults of the Romantic School. Heine seems to have been the only person who valued them highly, and they remained his sole dramatic efforts. In form the "Intermezzo" marks an advance on the earlier poems; ethically, however, it showed increasing bitterness, sinking sometimes to vituperation, and a reckless boldness that rose at times to sensuality. Yet some of Heine's most perfect lyrics are here.[1] As for the reception of the book at home, Heine tells us his mother read it and did not like it, his sister tolerated it, his brothers did not understand it, and his father did not read it at all.

It was in this year (1823) that a visit to the North Sea brought him for the first time to the ocean, which then and later he learned to know and love as no other German poet has done. The poems of this time, grouped under the title "Heimkehr," with the later "Nord-See" cycle, are the finest verses of the sea that Germany has ever produced. They will bear comparison with the best work of Byron and

[1] For instance, "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai," "Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam," "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges," and "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'."

Shelley in this field, and could merit no higher praise.[1]

The year 1824 brought him to Göttingen again, bent on legal studies, but led aside from them, as he complains, by the Library and the Rathskeller. "Love torments me, too, no longer the old, the single, but just as I am growing inclined to double-beer, I am getting inclined to double-love," as Richter called it. "I love the Venus de' Medici that stands here in the library, and I love the pretty cook of Counsellor Bauer. Alas! I am unlucky with both." He was more fortunate in student duels, of which he fought three and came off scathless.

He was much perplexed at this time in regard to a change of religious confession. To practise law in Germany he must be a member of a Christian church. Baptism for this purpose was a pure form, and he alone of his family objected to it. As he approached the end of his studies the question grew urgent, and his inner conflict was reflected in "Der Rabbi von Bacharach," an unfinished story of great beauty which was written at this time. To be subjected to such a mockery could not fail to arouse bitter indignation in him, and so he was brought to sympathize with the cause of his ancestors, though their faith had never been his own. He was baptized in June, 1825, and took his legal degree in the next month; but after all

[1] "Heimkehr" contains "Wir sassen am Fischerhause," "Der Mond ist aufgegangen," "Das Meer erglänzte," "Du schönes Fischermädchen," as well as the famous "Lorelei," this last adapted from a ballad by Brentano.

he never practised law. His act brought him no gain, and it is to his credit that he never attempted to palliate it. "I should be sorry," he wrote to Moser, "if my being baptized should appear to you in a favorable light. I assure you if the law would have admitted stealing silver spoons instead, I would not have been baptized." He felt the act dishonorable, though forced on him by the state, and it makes a melancholy close to his brilliant career as a university student.

Meantime, however, he had completed the "Harzreise," which was the fruit of a journey taken during his second stay in Göttingen, and remains perhaps the best known of all his prose works. After receiving his degree he went again to the North Sea, and wrote a considerable part of "Nordeney," afterward also incorporated in the "Reisebilder." He had still to go in search of a publisher; but in 1826 good fortune led him to Campe, of Hamburg, a literary man with whom he had many points of sympathy, who exploited Heine's works to their mutual profit till the poet's death.

Under Campe's auspices, the "Harzreise," with "Heimkehr," a group of songs, and some other poems, appeared in 1826. Heine, though he had twice revised it, was doubtful of its success, and even when undeceived by the result, was not shaken in his opinion. But while critics criticised, they could not help admiring, and the general public were universally enthusiastic over the genial pen-pictures of the Harz and the new chords in his poetry of the sea. The songs were

almost immediately set to music and sung in every parlor. "People were amazed to see a poet who could to such a degree control, unite, and capriciously mingle poetry and prose, the popular and the artistic, the sentimental and the ironical, earnest and jest, melancholy and high spirits, the agreeable and the grewsome, fancy and reality, the tender and the strong." (Proelsz, 138.) None resisted the charm, it was something new in German literature, newer even than the lyrics. Such light, easy, sparkling prose, such graceful, daring, bubbling wit, had not yet been seen in Germany, and were to remain an unattained model for the imitation of following generations. Heine has never been equalled in this field save by himself, and he has not always maintained the level of the "Harzreise."

The "Reisebilder" are not Pictures of Travel in an ordinary sense, nor, except in a secondary way, descriptions of the scenery of the Harz and the North Sea. The book opens with a satirical account of Göttingen and of student life there. Then the writer tells of a learned disquisition he proposes to write, in mockery of the heavy German erudition of that day, on "The Feet of Göttingen Ladies." In Chapter I. he will deal of feet in general, in Chapter II. of the feet in classical antiquity. Chapter III. shall bring us to the feet of elephants, and IV. to the feet of the ladies of Göttingen. Chapter V. is to contain a digest of all that has been said about these feet in the students' beer-garden, and Chapter VI. shall treat them in their environ-

ment. If he can find sheets large enough, he will add copperplate illustrations. He is never weary of laughing at Göttingen pedantry, and tells us how one professor's son would not play with another because he did not know the accusative of *mensa*. By and by, as he gets started on his journey, we hear more of the strange characters he meets by the way, of his dreams in country inns, of the poetry of nature, than we do of mountains and forests. The close, the most brilliant part of the whole, is a wonderful description of the Brocken, the highest peak of the Harz, of a student carouse in the inn there, and of his room-mate, "who in his long brown wrapper looked like an emetic powder." The book ends with the descent from the Brocken, and the exquisite idyl of the mountain brook, the Ilse and its Ilsenthal.

The greater part of 1826 Heine spent in travel, with the ultimate intention of practising law in Paris. He visited Nordeney again, busy with the second part of "Nordsee," and with the autobiographical "Buch le Grand," which he said was to show "pure genuine humor"; but he was thirsting for battle, as we can see from his letters, and the "Buch le Grand," with its revolutionary teaching and cultus of Napoleon, was calculated, as he saw, to give "both pleasure and anxiety" in Germany, so much so that he thought it safer to abide its publication in England (1827). "Something must be done in these hard, servile times," he writes. "I have done my part, and put to shame those hard-hearted friends who wanted to do

so much and are silent now. When they are together and stand in rank and file, the most cowardly recruits are courageous, but he shows true courage who stands alone." And when he hears of the book's enthusiastic reception, he exclaims with elation, "I have won an immense following. . . . If I keep well, I can do much now, for I have a far-resounding voice. You shall hear it often thundering against the jailers of ideas and suppressors of hallowed rights. I shall get a very 'extraordinary professorship' in the university of high minds."

The "Buch le Grand" was more read than talked or written about, for people feared the censorship and the police. It was speedily prohibited in Prussia, Austria, Hanover, and Mecklenberg. But that was not necessary to secure its circulation: it would have been read although it had not been forbidden. Even the praise of Napoleon was not resented by the German people, who felt that he was a tyrant of their own, a popular hero, sprung from the people, and the representative of the revolutionary liberties whose loss they still deplored. Critics might raise a warning voice against the capricious disorder of the composition, which borders on the Shandyesque. All that is true, but the book has in it a life that defies criticism, graceful, grotesque, cynical, naïve, with a vigor, a brilliancy, a keenness of scorn, a fire of enthusiasm, that have seldom been surpassed, and make the book worth reading to-day, when all the direct interests that it represents are but dust and ashes of the past.

A quotation may serve at once as a specimen and as a defence of Heine's irony. He has been speaking of the familiar commonplace that all the world is a stage, on which tragedy and comedy are inextricably mingled. So "Aristophanes shows us the most awful pictures of human madness in the mirror of wit, the great burden of the thinker who sees our nothingness (Faust) Goethe ventures to express only in the short couplets of the puppet-play, and the deadliest lament over the misery of the world Shakspere has put in the mouth of a fool who anxiously shakes the while his cap and bells. They have all learned it from the original Poet, who in the thousand acts of his world-tragedy knows how to push humor to the uttermost, as we see every day. After the exit of the hero come the clowns and the 'graciosos' with their fool-clubs and whips, after the bloody Revolution scenes and Imperial acts come waddling on again the fat Bourbons, with their old worn-out jokes and pretty Legitimist puns, and the old noblesse skips gracefully up with its famished smile, its crosses, and its banners. . . . And the dear God reckons up that this theatre cannot hold out much longer, for one gets too much pay and another too little, and all play much too ill." "Strange," he says in another paragraph, "strange that the three greatest adversaries of the Emperor have already found an awful fate. Londonderry cut his throat, Louis XVIII. rotted on his throne, and Professor Saalfeld is still Professor in Göttingen."

English liberty, and its great representative, Can-

ning, had attracted Heine to London, but he did not love England nor the English. Wellington he describes as "a stupid ghost, with ash-gray soul, in a stiff linen body, with a wooden smile on an icy face." London he thought fit perhaps for a philosopher, but no town for a poet. "I might settle in England," he says in another place, "were it not that I should find there two things I cannot endure, coal-smoke and Englishmen." Indeed, "the ocean would have swallowed England long ago if he had not feared it would give him a nausea." What Heine disliked in that country was its narrowness, philistinism, and especially its hypocrisy and cant. He knew, of course, that he was unjust to a land where he had been warmly received, and did not mean his spleen to be taken seriously. He once made a brilliant and not unjust distinction between the races of Europe in their feeling for liberty. "An Englishman," he says, "loves liberty as he does his legal wife. She is a possession. He may not treat her with much tenderness, but he knows how to defend her. A Frenchman loves liberty like his affianced bride: he will do a thousand follies for her sake. A German loves liberty like his old grandmother. And yet . . . the surly Englishman may some day in ill temper put a rope round her neck, the inconstant Frenchman may become unfaithful to his adored, . . . but the German will never quite abandon his old grandmother; he will always keep for her a nook in the chimney-corner, where she can tell her fairy tales to the listening children."

In September, 1827, Heine was again in Hamburg seeing through the press his collected lyrics, the now famous "Buch der Lieder," for which Campe received a fortune and he fifty louis d'or. November found him in Munich writing for the "Political Annals" of the noted publisher, Cotta. He hoped to get some government employment here or in Berlin, and did not scruple to suggest to Cotta that he should approach the king with the suggestion that his wit should be valued by its keenness, not by the good or bad use to which he had put it. But even if he was ready to sell himself, he was too dangerous a man to buy, and so, in July, 1828, he turned his disappointed face to Italy.

His impressions of this journey are told after his peculiar manner in the "Baths of Lucca," the third part of the "Reisebilder." Sunny Italy suggested to him that the German summer was, after all, "only winter painted green, where the sun wore a flannel jacket to keep it from taking cold." The satire of this book is mainly directed against the relation of Jews to Christians in Germany, but he went out of his way to make a bitter personal attack on Count Platen, which made him rancorous enemies, and frightened even his friends, who could not but see that, from a moral, even more than from a literary standpoint, the book was inferior to its predecessors. "It was pronounced," says Sharp (p. 124), "the most brilliant, the wittiest, the most entertaining, the most immoral, the coarsest, the most dangerous, the most revolutionary, the most atheistical book that

any German author had ever printed." It would be better to drop the superlatives in every case. Heine himself had been more brilliant, witty, and entertaining. It would be easy to find others more coarse and more immoral.

After the appearance of this book, Heine would not have been allowed to live in Prussia, nor could he hope to live in peace anywhere. He had made influential men his mortal enemies, wantonly and with small excuse. Hamburg was disagreeable to him, and when he was recalled from Italy by his father's death in the winter of 1828–29, he went, after a brief interval, to Helgoland, where he gave much time to serious study of Schiller and Goethe, and of the Bible. "What a book!" he exclaims. "Great and wide as the world, with roots deep in the abyss of creation, and stretching up into the blue secrets of heaven."

During this period he produced little, but the French Revolution of 1830 roused him like a thunderclap. "I know now once more what I will, ought, must. I am son of the Revolution, and I seize once more the enchanted arms on which my mother spoke the spell. Flowers, flowers! I will crown my head, and reach me, too, the lyre that I may sing a battle-song." But he had no serious disposition to fight with anything but his pen, for he was indeed but a "parlor demagogue." And so, when the reaction to the hopes of 1830 came in Germany with its sharper censorship, Heine's thoughts turned more and more to that fruitful mother of revolutions by the Seine, and

May, 1831, found him in Paris, which remained his home for twenty-five years that brought him perhaps more fame, surely more suffering, than he had yet known.

The poet's first years in Paris were filled with journalism and feuds with German liberals. Into these political quarrels we need not enter. Heine's nature is full of enigmas. He seems always to have been patriotic in his way, but he was not a man of action. Besides, he was cosmopolitan in his sympathies, and soon felt as much at home in Paris as any stranger can feel in a foreign country. From the first, he enjoyed the society of the most distinguished men and women of literary France, among them Madame Récamier, "the famous beauty of the Merovingian epoch" as he called her, the novelists Balzac, Dumas, Sand, the poet Béranger, the critic Janin, the historians Mignet and Thiers, the antiquarian Chevalier, and the musicians Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, and Meyerbeer. His journalistic work of this time is still interesting for its contemporary pictures of the men and times of the bourgeois king, but his political views were modified to suit his employers, a thing not altogether without excuse under the German censorship of the press. His real position, then and afterward, was moderately monarchical. He was not a republican, and he had a dread of communism, for he felt it could hardly be warded off in the future. At this time, too, his old hatred of the aristocracy of birth was yielding to a stronger hatred of the plutocracy, as he saw it spreading its branches wide under the genial

reign of Louis Philippe. However, in spite of all moderation, his letters were prohibited in nearly every German state. This was ultimately the fate also of the "Salon," his annual review of French art, which at that time was showing new activity and originality that Heine was first to proclaim and help to introduce in Germany.

But the most significant product of his first French decade was "The Romantic School" (1833), Heine's "most important work after the best of his songs. None of the later German historians has characterized the nature of German Romanticism with more acuteness or accuracy."[1] By it he hoped to correct what he thought unjust in Madame de Staël's "Germany," and it was in France that it had its chief effect; the more, as it too was immediately prohibited in most German states. But nothing that he had written was so effectual in establishing his fame in his new home. It opened to him the "Revue des Deux Mondes," then a far greater power than to-day, and here he published a "History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany since Luther," which is among the most suggestive works on the development of German thought, but mixed with so many allusions to present abuses that it could pass the German censorship only in a very mutilated condition. "Strange," he muses, "we Germans are the strongest and cleverest people. Our princely families sit on all the thrones of Europe, our Rothschilds govern all the exchanges of the world, our scientists

[1] Julian Schmidt, Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur.

rule in all sciences, we have invented powder and printing, and yet whoever fires a pistol with us pays three thalers fine, and if we want to put in the newspaper, 'My dear wife has a daughter, beautiful as liberty,' Dr. Hoffmann takes his red pencil and scratches out 'liberty.'" In the main, this book is an exposition of how Protestant theology had developed into metaphysics, with a popular exposition of the fundamental ideas of Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and a few words about Hegel, to whom he expected to recur. He ends the book with a prophecy that, if free-thought becomes real in Germany, the French will have more to fear from her "than from the whole Holy Alliance, with all their Croats and Cossacks."

Meantime some satirical poems published in 1833, and the half autobiographical "Memoirs of Schnabelewopski," had brought on the poet a storm of rage from those who saw themselves held up to ridicule, and they replied with censure for the immoral life of the poet. Indeed, with all allowances and the benefit of every doubt, this censure was deserved. But in 1834 his relation to Matilde, which, like Goethe's to Christiane, ended in marriage, and had been so regarded from the first, brought greater regularity into his life, though it is humiliating to think that he paid her aunt three thousand francs for persuading Matilde to the match, and that she knew it. Still Matilde was genuinely attached to him, and though her lack of culture, or even primary education, often annoyed him, — for she had small idea of his fame,

and in early years perhaps never read a line of his poetry, — Heine grew much attached to the bright, cheerful woman who tended him through years of painful illness, and remained faithful to his memory through a long widowhood, for which he had made every exertion to provide. She died in 1883.

Soon after this union financial embarrassments led Heine to seek and accept a secret pension from the French government, hardly a delicate thing for a foreign journalist, though he continued to criticise his patrons as freely as ever. The truth was discovered in 1848, and was bitterly remembered against him by less fortunate compatriots.

The literary work of this, the least sympathetic period of Heine's life, may be briefly dismissed. A fragment of a novel, the "Florentine Nights," was followed by an essay in German mythology, now of value chiefly because it contained a popular song which was to be the starting point of Wagner's "Tannhäuser," as an allusion in "Schnabelewopski" had been of his "Flying Dutchman." Large projects of a great Continental newspaper and of sensational memoirs came to nothing. Yet the close of 1837 found Heine, in spite of sickness, at the height of hope if not of fame, and indeed he might have had a peaceful and prosperous career before him had not that cynicism, the child of the irony he had nursed, made him more eager to make enemies than others are to make friends, more zealous for a cutting epigram than for sober truth.

This appeared most glaringly in his essay (1840)

on his fellow-exile and compatriot, Börne, an eloquent journalist with whom he had had a feud of long standing. The reckless slander of this book, portions of which he was obliged publicly to withdraw, mark the lowest point in a moral decay that had been going on for ten years. But its unfounded accusations against a Madame Wohl brought him a duel, and this roused him to legalize his relation to Matilde by marriage, which was a much needed moral tonic, though he seized the occasion for a remark that shows how the cynical habit of mind gradually blights the tenderest relations. "This monster of a Madame Wohl," he said in his wife's presence to a friend, "has taken a cruel vengeance on me. I owe it to her that I am married, but I will avenge myself. When I left the church I made my will. My wife is universal legatee with the single condition that she marry again. I want to be sure that at least one man will mourn my loss daily. Why did that poor Heine die? he will say. If he were still living I should not have his wife." In the political writings of this time one can see just this lack of genuineness. The work is perhaps as brilliant as ever, but it carries no conviction because it seems to contain none.

Though in 1839 Heine, and perhaps his friends also, thought that his poetical period was passed, the spring was gathering for a new outburst, and in 1842 "Atta Troll," that "last wood-flower of the Romantic," was ready for the press, though it was not published till 1847. He thought it the most important thing he

had written. Under the thin disguise of the tale of a dancing bear who escapes to the Pyrenees, and is shot there, he satirizes German politics and politicians on the one hand, and the Romantic School on the other. This mad "Midsummer Night's Dream" is too full of local allusions to be appreciated fully to-day, though enough remains intelligible to explain the universal excitement it caused. But of course it brought him more fear than love, and the poet was coming to a period in his life when a man values more the love than the dread of his fellows.

In 1843, after twelve years of half voluntary exile, Heine made a brief visit to Germany for family reasons, and the next year there appeared a volume of "New Poems," and "Germany, a Winter's Tale," — "a romantic, political poem" he called it, "intended to show in the boldest, most personal way, the whole ferment of Germany to-day;" but in reality it was a cynical account of his journey and its disillusions. The success of both was phenomenal, and indeed Heine had seldom done better work than those lyrics, nor written keener satire in the naturalistic vein than glitters in the "Winter's Tale."

It was in this year (1844) that he began to suffer acutely with a disease of the eye that troubled him at intervals till the end, and led him to travel much in search of relief. Solomon Heine's death and the disgraceful meanness of his heir, whom Heine had nursed during the cholera plague at the risk of his life, intensified the nervous disorder. The vocal cords now began to be affected, and a disease of the

spinal marrow made him a helpless invalid in all but his mind, which had still to endure ten years of purifying suffering. He indeed had no thought of such a lingering death. Already in 1846 he made his will, and wrote to his friend Laube that, if "he did not find him at No. 41, Faubourg Poisonnière, he should look for him in the Montmartre cemetery, — not Père la Chaise, which was too noisy to be agreeable." He had ceased to care for political life, and even the Revolution of 1848 did not rouse him. "The Republic is nothing more than a change of name," he writes, "a revolutionary title. How could this corrupt, effeminate society change so quickly? Paris, believe me, is for Napoleon, — I mean the gold Napoleon." And again he says, "I bow to fate because I am too weak to face it; but I will not kiss her garment's hem."

These years of patient suffering that close Heine's career give it a tragic element that wins back our sympathy for one whose reckless life had almost forfeited it. They show Heine in a nobler light than any in which he had yet appeared. He had never been strong, and early excesses had undermined his constitution. He had frequent warnings, but the witchery of Paris had drowned, time and again, the voice of prudence, and even now he could not regret the memory of those light-hearted days. "The happy consciousness that I have led a bright life," he writes in 1846, "fills my soul even in this wretched time." As one of his biographers has said, "He had striven to give the senses and the body like rights

with the soul. Now it was to appear how high his soul rose above both."

In the spring of 1848 Heine took his last walk in Paris. Half blind, lame, dragging himself along with the aid of a cane, a street riot drove him for refuge to the Louvre, and he found himself in the hall of the classical divinities. Suddenly there rose before him, with an overawing power which only those who have felt it know, the wonderful calm beauty of the Venus of Milo. "The goddess looked compassionately on me, but yet disconsolately, as though she would say, 'Dost thou not see that I have no arms, and cannot help thee?'" And from the Louvre he carried his sick heart to its long resting-place on his "mattress-tomb."

Many friends have left us descriptions of these last years. Hillebrand, a somewhat noted writer of the next generation, who was with him during part of 1849 and 1850, says that he found him propped on mattresses on the floor, for it was long since he had been able to lie in a bed. His hearing was weak, his eyes closed, and to see he was obliged to hold up one of the lids with an emaciated finger. His legs were paralyzed, his body shrunken. Morphine alone quieted him. "In sleepless nights he composed his most beautiful songs. He dictated the whole of 'Romancero' to me. The poems were always ready in the morning, the polishing lasted hours." Hillebrand used to read to him, especially from the Bible and Goethe. "I am not become a pietist," he wrote to Campe, "but for all that I will not play with God. I will be honest with him as with

men, and all in my papers that was still left of the old blasphemous period, the fairest poison-blossoms, I have torn out with firm hand. . . . When that crackled in the flames I felt strangely, I confess, . . . and beside me I heard the ironically comforting voice of some Mephistopheles who whispered to me, 'The dear God will pay you much better for that than Campe,'" the publisher.

And yet up to the last there were times when the desire for revenge on those who had wronged him overcame him. "He would not die like a muzzled dog," he said, and once in the last month of his life, while writing his memoirs, Camille Selden relates that he burst out with a cruel laugh: "I have them. Dead or alive, they shall not escape me. Let whoever has insulted me guard himself from these lines. Heine dies not like any beast. The claws of the tiger will outlive the tiger himself."

Such flashes of the old spirit may be pardoned the sufferer who had much to bear from mean-spirited relatives and false friends. The "Memoirs" had indeed claws that too many were interested in sheathing, and the four volumes lie locked to this day in the Imperial Library at Vienna. But there was no lack of less dangerous humor. His wit, like Hood's, seemed exhaustless. "*Pouvez-vous siffler?*" asks the anxious doctor. That is, will your breath allow you to whistle, or, as the word may also be rendered, "hiss." Instantly the poet seizes the possibility and gasps, "Alas! no, not even Scribe's plays." "My nerves," he said in 1855, "would take the first prize

at the world's fair for pain and misery." He read medical books, "to qualify himself," he said, "to lecture in heaven on the ignorance of doctors about diseases of the spinal marrow." Writing to a friend, he describes his state as "a grave without rest, death without the privileges of the departed, who need no longer spend money, nor write letters, nor make books. What a wretched condition!"

In the main there was now a deeper earnestness in his life, and in the Preface to the "Romancero" (1851), he speaks frankly of his Christianity, though refusing to the last to be identified with any of the existing churches. "The misery of mankind is too great," he said. "When one lies on one's deathbed one gets very sensitive and impressionable, and wants to make peace with God and the world. Yes, I have returned to God, like the prodigal son, after tending swine with the Hegelians. Heavenly homesickness came over me and drove me forth through woods and ravines and over the dizziest mountain paths of dialectics."

The "Romancero" had a more rapid sale than any previous work of Heine, from eleven to twelve thousand being called for in two months. Such work would have been admirable under any circumstances. That these poems, so tender, so melodious, so exquisite in form and fancy, should be the product of the sleepless nights of a bedridden sufferer seemed almost beyond belief. Yet they showed no trace of failing power. To many critics they seem rather to mark the culmination of his lyrical genius. Here are

found the exquisite "Hebrew Melodies," in which, especially in "Jehuda ben Havely," the Biblical influence is very strongly marked. Here too is that noble ballad of Hastings Field, how the swan-necked Edith sought the body of her lord, King Harold; here is that Marseillaise of German social democracy, the "Weaver's Song," which it is forbidden to sing in Germany to this day; here, too, is the delicious extravaganza, "The White Elephant," and at the other extreme of the emotional scale, the "Lazarus Cycle," written under the shadow of impending death.

Two miscellaneous volumes, headed by his "Confessions," appeared in 1854, and contained nothing to weaken his hold on the public. In France his fame was greater than ever; but his heart was closing to literary ambition. He writes to Campe: "I am sick as a dog, and this great success which brings me daily enthusiastic visits and all that can flatter human vanity cheers me little, and even increases my melancholy when I think how all this comes too late." "Often," he says in another place, "a doubt quivers through me whether a man really is a two-legged god, as Hegel told me twenty-five years ago. I am no more a divine biped. I am no more the high priest of the Germans after Goethe, no more the great heathen No. 2, a Hellene of jovial life and portly person, laughing cheerfully down on dismal Nazarenes. I am only a poor death-sick Jew."

When Meissner said to him of his last poems, that he had never written anything like them, he lifted his eyelid with his bloodless hand and said: "Yes,

yes, I know it. That is beautiful, horribly beautiful. That is a lament as though from a grave; it seems there as though a man that had been buried alive were wandering through the night, or perhaps a corpse, or the grave itself. German poetry has never heard such tones, and never could hear them, for no poet has ever yet been in such a case." These Lazarus songs are as unique in German as "Kubla Khan" in English; weird visions of strange beauty, or of horror, torment, and awe, come to us with the vividness of reality that make them terrible. But beside those notes of mortal agony, the old irony peers out now and again, and even the sportive grace of the "Buch der Lieder" has not wholly deserted him. Heine was never so many-sided as now, never had he shown such complete mastery of literary genius that could give every mood its fit poetic expression.

He continued to work as long as he could hear and speak. Even in 1855 he would compose five or six hours a day, beside revising what had been done. Many friends still cheered him with their visits, among them, after 1855, the youthful and talented adventuress, Camille Selden, who lives as La Mouche in some of his latest verses; and Caroline Jaubert, his "little fairy," whose motherly care was very precious to him, for their friendship was constant and never troubled by any suggestion of a nearer relation.[1] But his wife, Matilde, was his first and

[1] Heine's best poems to Camille Selden begin thus: "Es träumte mir von einer Sommernacht," "Dich fesselt mein Gedankenbahn,"

constant thought. For her he labored on that she might not want after his death anything that he could give her. And it is pleasant to think that these last wishes were fulfilled.[1]

On the 13th of February, 1856, he composed for six hours. They begged him to spare himself. "I have still four days' labor, then my work is done," he answered. But he never wrote more. On the 16th he asked faintly for "paper and pencil." These were his last words.[2] On the 17th he died. He was buried quietly on the 20th, in the cemetery of Montmartre, without religious services. Matilde claimed the right to erect his simple monument.

It has been said of Heine that he was "the representative of a skeptical time of ferment." Perhaps it would be better to say "the skeptical representative of a time of ferment." Various critics have variously compared him, endeavoring to fix his elusive genius by coupling it with one more easily grasped. Thus he figures as the German counterpart of the Greek Aristophanes, of the Latin Catullus, of the Spaniard

"Lass mich mit glühnden Zangen kneipen," "Worte, Worte, keine Thaten," "Wahrhaftig wir beide bilden." She has contributed to his memory, "Les Derniers Jours de H. Heine," Paris, 1884. Madame Jaubert lived till 1884 in Paris.

[1] Matilde received 28,000 francs in cash and a pension of 8,250 francs annually. In return she suppressed the "Memoirs." Heine's best poems to her are: "An die Engel," "Babylonische Sorgen," and "Ich war, O Lamm, als Hirt bestellt."

[2] Some say he had still strength to gasp to an officious friend who besought him to make a formal peace with Heaven, "Dieu me pardonnera, c'est son métier." The story lacks evidence.

Cervantes, of the English Sterne, Swift, Byron, and Shelley, of the Scot Burns, and of the French Rabelais, Villon, Voltaire, and Béranger. Others have grouped him with Jean Paul. But the very variety of comparison only illustrates the hopelessness of the task. And we cannot think that even he himself rightly comprehended himself when he doubts if a laurel wreath should lie on his coffin, but asks that a sword be placed there because "he was a brave soldier in humanity's War of Liberation."

It is not so that we think of him to-day, but rather as he who transferred to a political and social field the activity of Goethe in a literary one, who in an age of democratic upheaval saw more clearly than any other the hollowness of inherited social conditions, though he could not solve the problem of the future. Heine was essentially a realist. He painted life as he saw it, and he conceded, as he grew older, less and less to romantic imagination. He bore the banner of revolutionary reform, but he was never its blind partisan. Of all German writers, of whatever period, he is most completely in touch with the restless, questioning, dissatisfied spirit of the present day, a spirit that has lost its old ethical moorings, and has found as yet no new anchorage. Therefore men read him with sympathy. He is the wittiest, clearest, keenest satirist, the most delicate and graceful writer of songs in Germany. Therefore men read him with delight. Less positive than Goethe, he has not the peculiar quality that makes a classic for all ages and peoples, and yet, as Matthew Arnold says, he is "in-

comparably the most important figure of that quarter of a century that follows the death of Goethe."

> "The spirit of the world,
> Beholding the absurdity of men,
> Their vaunts, their feats, let a sardonic smile
> For one brief moment wander o'er his lips,
> That smile was Heine." — M. Arnold.

CHAPTER XI.

IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE SINCE 1850.[1]

It is interesting to note how, in every one of the great languages of Europe, the novel is coming to take the foremost place in imaginative literature. This is as true of France and England as of Germany. If we ask ourselves who were the representative writers of Elizabeth's day, or of Anne's, or of the Georges', the larger part of the names that rise to our minds will be poets. In our own day, the men of corresponding position are the novelists. Even Tennyson and the Brownings, Longfellow, and Lowell as a poet, seem to belong to a receding generation. And so in France, the men who made famous the age of Louis XIV. were the poets, while to-day prose is the favorite vehicle of literary expression. In Germany, Heine is the last of the great poets, and the novelists have come to claim almost the entire field of imaginative literature. By their number more perhaps than by their merit they tend to drown all other voices. The annual production of novels in Germany appears, from Kürschner's "Litteraturlexikon," to be

[1] A portion of this chapter has appeared in "The Sewanee Review" for May, 1894.

about twelve hundred, and to them we may probably add at least six thousand short stories. Of these, by far the greater part are of course wholly ephemeral. It is to the few writers whose work marks progress, development, or at least change, in the art and aim of fiction that I wish to direct attention here, with but brief allusion to the other forms of pure literature.

The sources of modern German fiction need not be traced beyond Wieland and the literary circle of Weimar. For their whole imaginative literature stands in essential relation to the French Revolution as the immediate source of the social problems of our day. It is first with Wieland that the German novelist becomes a social philosopher, who seeks the key to living vital questions. He is, to be sure, a laughing philosopher, an Epicurean *pococurante;* but yet he brought fiction back to the psychological and philosophical basis that had made the glory of Wolfram von Eschenbach.

Goethe accepted his standpoint and bettered his instruction. By his analysis of character, he opened a boundless field to the novelists of the future. Keen insight and fearless opposition to prejudices, moral or social, in "Werther" and "Wilhelm Meister," and the remarkable perfection of form in the "Elective Affinities," had an influence on fiction that can be traced for at least two generations, while in Schlegel's "Lucinde" we have the troubled source of a turbid stream of novels that preach woman's rights and social reform generally. But the "Lucinde" and the

"Elective Affinities" are the only novels of the earlier period whose influence can be traced after 1850.

For the generation that was in its prime when our half-century began had been occupied with political life as few in Germany had ever been. The years between the French Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 had been a period of intense fermentation beyond the Rhine also. That was no time for the pretty fancies of the Romanticists, — for Blue Flowers and Water Fairies. It was a time of serious problems, — the critical point of the struggle between the old feudal constitution of German society and the new democracy, between aristocracy and industrialism, — the age of popular journalism in Germany, of the railway and the steamboat. The year 1848 not only marks the dividing line in politics, but draws it as distinctly between the old literature and the new.

"Young Germany" was full of energy and zeal; they were reformers, revolutionists rather, bent on destroying all barriers to social freedom, or, as it has been epigrammatically called, "the emancipation of the flesh." At their head was Gutzkow, and one of his first stories bore the significant title, "Wally, the Female Skeptic." It earned its author fame, and what was then the added honor of three months' imprisonment, and it had many fellows in its attack on the existing social order, more bold than wise, but voicing very clearly the impending democratic upheaval. Among these, two youthful works of Luise Mühlbach, "The Pupil of Nature" and "The Pupil of Society," deserve special notice. Literary Ger-

many was now in closest touch with France. Sand, Sue, and Dumas, following in the steps of Rousseau, were studying modern life with the same sympathy that these Germans were showing for the lowest social strata, and both found in severity to the aristocracy a key to popular favor. Thus for the first time in its history the German novel came to have the actuality and living reality of a political pamphlet. In their hands it grew to be what it has ever since remained, one of the most effective forms of social and political propagandism in Germany. For this purpose, it took, and still takes, its subjects from very recent history. The true historical novel was not developed till some years later, as these enthusiastic reformers grew older and cooler. The best work of this kind that "Young Germany" produced, Laube's "Der Deutsche Krieg," a story of the Thirty Years' War, was not written till 1863–65.

Meantime, outside of this immediately political sphere, the gospel of "emancipation," first preached in the "Lucinde," and ably seconded by Johanna Schopenhauer, mother of the pessimistic philosopher, had its natural result in the multiplying of female novelists, which is a characteristic sign of this time. Beside Mühlbach and the sane and moderate Lewald appear the radical Luise Ashton, the mildly polygamous Ida Frick and Ida Hahn-Hahn, whose genial theory seems to be that a woman whose heart is large enough for two ought not to be content with one. Even the mild and gentle Marlitt does not always hide her emancipationist birthmark.

Marriage is of course the subject dear to these feminine hearts. Fanny Lewald has turned it in every direction, and looked at it from every side. After forty-five years, she decided that practice was better than speculation. She married Professor Stahr (1885), and the subject lost its interest for her. Other women, too, grow far less radical in this matter, and Wilhelmine von Hillern has actually satirized blue-stockings and all their ways in "Der Arzt der Seele" (1869).

In style, the novels of "Young Germany" showed growing delicacy in detail-painting and increasing clearness in form and language, which may be ascribed to the stimulus and example of Goethe's "Elective Affinities." In their general tendency an independent nationalism asserts itself with growing confidence, — a confidence that is never lost, even in the dreary reaction that followed the premature outburst of 1848.

This reaction, however, turned fiction for a time from the political to the purely literary field. Ceasing perforce to preach, it strove to entertain, and even aspired to cultivate. These were the palmy days of "Die Gartenlaube" and other unpolitical and generally "harmless" journals. But the novelists were still almost wholly from the liberal school in politics, and strongly influenced by the scientific development of the age and the theory of evolution Under this guise, the novel became more respectable, more fit for the parlor table, and found a widening circle of readers; and thus we are brought to our

own time, where it will be convenient to distinguish historical fiction from novels that deal with contemporary life, which themselves invite subdivision, as will appear presently.

The modern historical school of fiction begins with Karl Spindler and Willibald Alexis, who used history in a time of national humiliation to strengthen and deepen the patriotic spirit.[1] Equally national and more artistic is Scheffel's "Ekkehard" (1855), which the universal voice has already raised to the rank of a classic.[2] Here thorough study joins with genial fancy and hearty humor to present a charming picture of courtly and monastic life in mediæval Germany. Many of its characters and scenes are part and parcel of the popular literary consciousness, and familiar to those who have never read the rather bulky volume. It is a story of the tenth century, and the hero is a monk of St. Gall, teacher of Duchess Hedwig of Swabia, who discovers too late their mutual love when his obtuseness has roused her wrath and caused his exile. Without any pretence of learning, Scheffel has drawn a wonderfully fresh and bright picture of the period when German society was crystallizing, and the simplicity of the style well suits an age when the world was young. The humor has a childlike gaiety very different from the sarcasm and irony that tinges the later humorists of the century. This was Scheffel's only important

[1] For instance, "Isegrimm" and "Ruhe ist die erste Pflicht."

[2] Its sale (a hundred and ten thousand) far exceeds that of any other German novel.

novel, but he was author also of "Juniperus" (1866), a tale of the Crusades, and of the famous story in verse of the "Trumpeter of Säkkingen" (1854), once student of law, then wandering musician, and at last Papal band-master, — a story told with more verve and bubbling humor than was common in Germany then or is now.[1]

In Scheffel the German spirit was deep and strong. Professor Ebers brings us to the sphere of purely antiquarian interests. His novels have so little of the distinctively Germanic that they are almost as widely read in America as at home. Most of them have Old Egypt for their scene, and their attraction lies in the curiosity that this new-old world naturally excites even in the half cultured. His style is charming, his plots well managed, but he fails in the development of characters, which after all in their thoughts and motives are thoroughly modern. So, as Franz Hirsch has observed, if one were to transfer these novels from Egypt to modern times, and give these "four o'clock tea" Egyptians modern costumes, one would soon see how dry, unreal, weak, and poor, how artificial in sentiment, how lacking in all poetic freshness, this so-called fiction is in its nature. In Ebers there is learning, as we might expect from a German professor. Learning builds for him an antique stage, perfect in every detail; but here his imagination fails, and modern actors tread the ancient

[1] This poem has been translated into English by Mrs. Brünnow (1877). Another translation, with an introduction by Theodore Martin, appeared in 1893.

boards.[1] Much the same may be said of the classical novels of Eckstein, whose titles, "Aphrodite" (1885), "Nero" (1889), "Prusias" (1887), "Die Claudier" (1881), sufficiently indicate their subjects; and Hamerling's "Aspasia" (1876), is also an unfortunate error in the same direction of an otherwise talented author.

A much higher place in this field must be accorded to Felix Dahn, who gives himself also a more sympathetic task, for he takes the German migration as his theme, and so strikes a chord that is sure to stir the German heart. His "Kampf um Rom" (1876) has a breadth and a swing that make it kin to the old popular epic, and give it a very high artistic unity. Indeed, this is one of the greatest historical novels of any country. Here we may watch Germanic virtues softened by the culture of the South, and falling at last a prey to its devious and unscrupulous diplomacy. The writer has chosen a generous canvas, but, though the tale fills four volumes, the interest never flags. Rather one feels a growing regret as one sees fatally impending the tragic close of the story and of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths.

In these dark ages when history is obscure, a freer scope may be claimed for the fancy of the novelist. Certainly Dahn has given his characters a wonderful reality. No German but feels that they are of his race, and his pulses beat quicker in sym-

[1] Vischer, in his novel "Auch Einer," has inserted a delightful parody of this antiquarian fiction.

pathy with a people whose democratic virtues were the causes of their fall. The mass of learning that this book involves is immense, but it is carried so lightly that only the specialist realizes with what care each detail of art, language, mythology, and antiquity is wrought into a perfect picture of the times. The Gothic princes, Theodoric, Totila, Wiligis, and Tela, are strongly drawn, while Amalaswintha rises, in her fearful vengeance, to the height of an ancient epic heroine. Cethegus, the old Roman, prefect, republican, despot, and demon, is, like Narses and Belisarius, rather a personification than a character; but the Emperor Justinian and his wife, the quondam circus dancer Theodora, are clearly conceived and sharply characterized. This is by far the greatest work of Dahn; but his shorter stories of the migration, though in lighter vein, have value both as side-lights to history and as poetic creations. The invasion of the Huns becomes more real by his "Attila" (1888). "Bissula" (1884) and "Felicitas" (1883) vivify and clarify our ideas of the relation of German and Roman culture along the Rhine as the empire was nodding to its fall. Not even Thierry had made the Merovingians so real as Dahn's "Fredigunde" (1885), that queen who lives still in French song as "the fair, the blond, the terrible."

The only compeer of Dahn in national fiction is Freytag, who had already earned a good report in the drama and in the romance of modern life, and had approved himself, in his "Pictures from the German Past" (1859–1862), a deep student of an-

tiquity and a master of composition. He was past middle life, already fifty-six, when he undertook, in a series of seven volumes, to erect a monument to the continuity of German character through all ages of its history. Eight years of his maturest talent were devoted to the work, which is already a classic in German literature. "Die Ahnen" (1872–1880), "The Ancestors," is wider in scope, more national in character, though perhaps less vivid in execution, than the work of Dahn. First, "Ingo" reaches back, with epic simplicity, into the twilight of German history; then "Ingraban" brings us to the Christian conversion and to our own St. Boniface. In both, the epic style rises to rhythm, and frequently to alliteration, so that form aids language in conjuring up these ancient scenes, which reach at times a tragic grandeur that recalls the fate of the Nibelungen. A third novel shows the Roman Church beginning to predominate in German culture; another tells of the Teutonic knights, and their struggle with Prussian heathendom. In "Marcus König" we come to the Reformation and the founding of the Prussian State. The concluding parts deal with the Thirty Years' War, the development of Prussia under Frederic William I., and the revival of national life after the humiliations of Napoleon. All is infused with a genuine patriotic spirit that knows no other limits than the German race. Few novelists have had so wide and lofty a conception of their vocation as Freytag and Dahn. Contemporary literature shows nothing like it. Nor is the reason hard to

see. No other nation in Europe, in the last half-century, has had its national pride so stirred, and its national consciousness so exalted, as Germany since 1866. In literature, as in history, the hour brings the man.

The conditions that fostered the talent of Freytag and Dahn naturally induced imitators, and inspired also men of independent though inferior genius. Among these Konrad Ferdinand Meyer is worthy of special study. It is peculiarly instructive to contrast the French tendencies of this author before 1870 with the thoroughly Germanic spirit of his later work; for though Meyer was a Swiss by birth and residence, the glories of his race roused in him also a patriotic glow, that infuses his "Jürg Jenatsch" (1876), "Thomas Becket" (1880), and "Die Versuchung von Peskara," which deal with the Thirty Years' War, the struggle of Church and State in the middle ages, and the fateful connection of Italy with the mediæval empire. These and his more recent "Lucretia Borgia" (1891) show at once a keen psychological analysis and careful historical study. His "Hochzeit des Mönchs" (1884) is one of the most powerful short stories in German, while "Hüttens Letzte Tage" (1871) is a direct and eloquent poetic expression of the German triumphs of 1870. To this inspiration may be ascribed also Gottschall's "Im Banne des Schwarzen Adlers" (1876), a novel of the times of Frederic II.; and the list could be greatly extended.

In the second division of fiction, the study of

modern life, if we go back to the reaction that followed the nipping of the aspirations of "Young Germany," in 1849, we shall find the writers still liberal in politics, and bent, though with greater moderation, on social and moral propagandism. Under these conditions imaginative work of the first order was not likely to be produced, and it is probably correct to say that the first novel since 1850 that is still read by any but students of literature, is Freytag's "Soll und Haben" (1855). This, too, is political in tendency; but it has raised the question to a higher plane, and has struck the key-note of the fiction of the generation. This key-note is the inevitable conflict between the industrial, democratic spirit of the age and the spirit of caste and privilege rooted in the feudal past and little shaken in Germany even by the French Revolution, — an inevitable conflict, with right and wrong on both sides, but with forces apparently so unequal that it might well seem necessary, in the words of Freytag's preface, "to rouse the people from their discouragement and show them a picture of their own worthiness." So here, as later in "Die Ahnen" he was inspired with a wise patriotism and able to aid effectively in the moral development of his nation. He preaches the gospel of honest industry. The great commercial house of Schröter, with its patriarchal government, with industry and honesty infusing energy in every part, "where work is pleasure," was something new in German fiction. The aristocracy, in its virtues and its weakness, is shown to be the nidus of the commercial Jews who prey

upon it, and the moral is that the nobility can maintain itself only by adopting, with its representative Fink, the virtues of the industrial class. But though "Soll und Haben" was once a gospel of democracy, to-day the book seems to belong to the past. The industrialism that it preached is an accomplished fact, and while it is still interesting, the novel has not the actuality that once made it a power.

For "Soll und Haben" was the beginning of a new epoch in fiction. Not as though the Romantic School had ceased to have its representatives, who still paraded mock pathos to the half-cultured. Keller and his "Grüner Heinrich" (1854) found no lack of popularity for its mystical maunderings, and the ranks of his admirers still endeavor to atone for their thinness by their enthusiasm.[1] But this can be regarded only as a perverse eddy in the critical current. Keller was not himself a German by birth or instinct. His stories are, from first to last, distinctively Swiss in tone and feeling. In this regard there is little to choose between the first part of the "Leute von Seldwyla," published in 1856, and the second, issued twenty years later. "Martin Salander," his last novel, is as intensely local as the "Züricher Novellen" or the "Sieben Legenden."

Another belated blossom of the Romantic is Storm, a Holsteiner, who died in 1888, and deserves a better fate than has befallen him in America, where he is

[1] Schönbach, Ueber Lesen und Bildung, 99–110, speaks for this group with more emphasis than discretion.

mainly known as the author of "Immensee," a mawkish tale, and quite inferior to the "Aquis Submersus," or "Der Schimmelreiter," which are good at least in local color, though rather exaggerated in sentiment. And there are several other men who carry on the Romantic tradition. But in the main the growing sternness has brushed these survivals aside. Neither they nor those who enjoy them are in touch with the spirit of to-day. This has been true ever since, in the sixties, it began to grow clear that the hour of political reckoning was not far off, and the intenser tension was immediately reflected in the sensitive barometer of fiction, to which Spielhagen's "Problematische Naturen" served as the significant index.

Here, as in his earlier ventures, Spielhagen showed himself a close student of Goethe. The very title is from the "Elective Affinities." The subject is the same irrepressible conflict between the stolid landed nobility and the misguided intelligence of the nation, culminating in the catastrophe of 1849. These stories show how fiction during the sixties begins to get more in touch with popular feeling, following it step by step in its aspirations and its hopes; for Spielhagen has always a cheerful confidence in the future, not shared by his contemporaries, Meissner and Hopfen. The aim of these novels, like that of the people for whom they were written, was, however, not always clear or decided. It is curious to note how, in this decade, Auerbach's "Auf der Höhe" (1865) and "Das Landhaus am Rhein" (1867), in contrast to "Barfüssle" and the harmless "Village

Tales" (1843 *seq.*) of his earlier manner, illustrate this same tendency in their attempted solution of social problems by the acid of Spinoza's philosophy. They are graceful, but a winter's chill runs through all.

But soon the progress of politics gave a new impulse to German energies. War with Denmark was followed close by the great victory over Austria in 1866 and the dazzling triumphs of 1870. The German empire was once more a reality, not the simulacrum that Napoleon had laid forever to rest in 1806, but such as it was in Barbarossa's day, a great, perhaps the greatest power in Europe.

The effect on the historical novel of this crisis of the world was transforming; on the novel of modern life it was less apparent; for the empire, while it lifted the political cloud, did not solve the social problems, which rather became the more acute as thought was more concentrated on them. Pessimism, the prevailing philosophy of the sixties, continues still to color the treatment of modern life. In Germany, as in France, the tendency is to lay bare life's seamy side, to deal with the diseased, the deformed, the exceptional. This tends to bring into the foreground a new factor, the religious, beside the political and the social. In Germany and in England the religious novel, or at least religion in the novel, begins to find a place, and there, as here, the attitude is, as it was in the political and social field, "liberal," that is, opposed to traditional Christianity. The leaders of thought in this field are Schopenhauer and Strauss;

the head of the new school of fiction is Paul Heyse, distinguished also as a critic, poet, and dramatist.

The first great novel of Heyse dates from 1873. "Children of the World" is its significant title, its contents pessimistic philosophy applied to every sphere of social life except the political. The divorce of religion and morality is its moral, the overthrow of the church establishment in Prussia its immediate purpose. This may not promise much to the American and probably Christian reader; but yet the book, in spite of what Bleibtreu calls its "sensuous sentimentality and sentimental sensuousness," where the author, "in a dress-coat promenades gracefully with sin," [1] in spite of its alleged "creeping poison," is of great talent and intense interest, — a work that would disown "Robert Elsmere" even for a weak and erring brother. Less powerful, but more delightful, than this novel is "Im Paradiese" (1875), a story of artist life in Munich. Its fundamental theory is much the same, however. Marriage is the theme, the thesis that freedom is permissible to the aristocracy of genius. The hero's unhappiness comes from his marriage, the cure from an artistic attachment; and that divorce and a second marriage restore all to the legal basis is, as Heyse expressly tells us, only a concession to formality. Of such "concessions" the whole book is full. The bulwarks of bourgeois morality are never directly attacked, but they are silently undermined in each of the four artist marriages that close the story. One cannot leave it, how-

[1] Bleibtreu, "Revolution in der Litteratur" (1887), p. 25.

ever, without bearing witness to the fresh beauty of its style and the graceful lightness of its movement, things rather rare in this school of fiction. But Heyse is perhaps best known by his short stories, which hold much the same place in Germany that Maupassant's do in France, — models in their kind, masterpieces of form, cameos cut with a firm hand, leaving an impression on the mind where every line tells.

Heyse's "Im Paradiese" naturally leads one to speak of Wilbrandt's "Hermann Ifinger" (1892), one of the most thoughtful novels of recent years, whose early scenes are laid in the artistic circles of Munich, though the story closes in Vienna. Both in its ethics and in its æsthetics this story breathes a healthy conservatism that is peculiarly refreshing and true to the best that is in German character, a clear vision of duty and an unswerving will. The book is one of the few of recent years that is strong and yet hopeful.

Less artistic, more rigidly modern, more closely affiliated to the French "naturalists," is Paul Lindau, who with Mauthner and Ring makes a specialty of dissecting low Berlin life, while Fontane and Heiberg show a more sympathetic study of the local types of the German capital.[1] These suggest Dickens's London sketches; but the former draw discouraging pictures that are not pleasant reading. Take, for instance, Lindau's "Arme Mädchen" (1887) where the poor

[1] E. g., "Frau Jenny Treibel" (1892) and "Die Familie von Stiegritz" (1893).

but honest girl struggles to preserve her repute and purity amid surroundings that drag her down, hindered by poverty from the marriage of her choice, and cutting at last the knot of her existence by suicide, quite in the old Werther fashion; while the girl of the middle class, her unacknowledged half-sister, who is far from sharing her virtue or virtues, steals her lover because she can offer him social equality, in exchange for which all merits weigh lightly, even in the mind of her highly respectable mother-in-law, who is indeed a sort of conspirator in her son's deception. Lindau is a Jew, and he may take a grim pleasure in exclaiming with Shylock, "These be your Christian husbands." Again in his "Spitzen" (1888), the cardinal question is if any circumstances would justify a man in betraying the honor a woman had confided to him. But the public are not casuists, nor is the novel a suitable place for ethical discussion. Were Berlin society as Lindau paints it, it would hardly hold together over night.

The same discouraged pessimism has possessed in recent years the work of Jensen, whose earlier stories, for instance the "Braune Erica" (1868), or "Eddystone" (1872) had shown a mastery of the prose idyl in descriptions of North German country scenes. Later the capital attracted him, and his annual novel grew gloomier every year in its treatment of the upper classes of society. Take, for instance, "In der Fremde" (1886). The pastor's daughter marries the young officer. Her betrothed theological student is left in the lurch. By and by, when she has dis-

covered that passion, not sympathy, drew them together, she meets her old love, now a university tutor in philosophy. The name of this friend of wisdom is Lorenz. It might as well have been Abelard, since hers is Heloïse. She hears him lecture on the fascinating topic, "The highest love is life's highest law." Nobody understands; but everybody is delighted, and Heloïse is "emancipated." In the last years Jensen has returned at times to his earlier manner; as, for instance, in the story of the Black Forest "Im Zwing und Bann" (1892).

Here, as with Heyse, there seems a sort of grudge in the author's mind against the basis of our social order; not, as in the forties, an open attack on marriage as such, but an undermining of its outposts, and indirectly a plea for free divorce. A group of French reformers gave the key-note. No German has caught their tone more completely than Ernst Eckstein. Let us consider "Jorinde" (1888). The scene is St. Remo, whither My Lady Jorinde has taken her poor heart to be cured of its hopeless love for the brilliant officer, Baron Prittwitz, who happens to be betrothed to another. Dr. Max cures My Lady's consumption, and offers her heart and hand, which are gratefully accepted. The young couple meet the officer. He has broken his engagement meantime. The old love claims its right in the young wife's heart. Dr. Max discovers the state of the case. On whom shall he take vengeance? On nobody, says German law. On the gentleman, say the ever gallant French. On the lady, says Eckstein, who tells us how Dr. Max nurses

back into activity the dormant seeds of his wife's consumption, and boasts of his success over her grave to the desolate Prittwitz. They have a duel, the Doctor is killed, Prittwitz becomes insane. The author sells several editions, and is reckoned among the first writers of his school. We shall meet this versatile man next among the — humorists.

These are but few from the legion of social novels; but they are typical of the class and sufficient for our purpose. These men write as reformers, they deal *ex professo*, with the exceptional and the diseased; but their work lacks both the literary and moral qualities that could give it permanent value. Probably first in historic fiction, in this field the Germans must take the second, perhaps the third, place among the nations of Europe.

Closely allied to these social studies are the novels that deal with recent politics with as much sensational liberty as the police censorship will allow. The best in this poor kind is Gregor Samarow (Georg von Meding) who spins, on such tragedies as the suicide of Louis II. of Bavaria, tales that appeal strongly to the middle classes, but do not exist for any other. Somewhat higher in aim are stories written, so far as can be seen, solely for healthy amusement. First, Marlitt, with easy fecundity, raised suspense to a science. Through the widely circulated "Gartenlaube" she exercised for many years a predominating influence on German women of the middle class, and through many translations on American women, also. Those whose literary memory dates

back a decade or two will recall "Old Mamzell's Secret," "Goldelse," and the "Little Moorland Princess," all painfully alike, all consulting neither natural nor psychological probability, all fostering a mild liberalism, religious and social, that accorded with, and doubtless promoted the tendency of the time. With Marlitt may be grouped three Austrian ladies: Madam Ebner-Eschenbach, a high-minded noblewoman, who knows above all things how to tell a good story and enjoys the telling of it; Ossip Schubin (Lola Kirschner); and Baroness von Suttner, whose gospel of peace, "Die Waffen Nieder" (1893), recently achieved a sensational success, less perhaps for its merits than for its doctrine.

A more careful student of life than these ladies, and appealing to a rather more cultured class than Marlitt, is Spielhagen, who, since 1870, has turned his attention from "reform" to the purveying of popular sensation, subordinating his preaching more and more to the demands of publisher and bookseller. "Sturmflut" (1877) shows, indeed, a higher tone. The great storm on the Baltic furnishes the background for a vivid picture of the speculative craze with which the French milliards infected Germany, and the fearful crash that followed. There is something epic in the rush of water here and of panic there, each a whirlpool of ruin. The ball on the eve of the crisis — dancing on a volcano — is the best single chapter in Spielhagen's work, and suggests Thackeray's Brussels before Waterloo. But in later years, Spielhagen's prolific pen takes more and more

the easy tone that suits the mental dyspepsia of his readers. "Quisisana" (1880) "roars you as gently as any sucking dove;" "Die Schönen Amerikanerinnen" (1884) is a commonplace story of a commonplace swindler and his interesting daughters; and "Hans und Grete" belongs to the naïve peasant tales, — of which, more presently. In general, Spielhagen's sympathies are democratic still, — probably because most of his readers share them. To this he occasionally sacrifices proportion, and caricatures his noblemen. He is weakest in the development of character, most witty in his dialogue, and strongest in action and plot.

Spielhagen and Marlitt may represent the entertaining social novel. Another group depends on the exotic for attraction. Franzos is wont to carry us to Galicia, Polodia, or the plains of Eastern Russia, which his imagination peoples with weird and wild creations. Lindau lays the scene of several novels in America, Jokai's Hungarian tales are familiar to American readers through cheap translations, and the rich imagination of Sacher-Masoch has run wild riot in unsavory stories of Russia, Galicia, and Vienna, whose pessimism is but a thinly disguised cultus of Venus Vulgivaga. Then there is a whole group of men who follow Auerbach with the unequal steps of little Iulus, and give us village stories, or, as the fashion now sets, Swiss and Tyrolese tales and Bavarian highland scenes. Doubtless there is a public for these sentimental milkmaids and sighing shepherds, — for the pessimistic jodlers and Alpine dis-

ciples of Schopenhauer. Anzengrüber, Rosegger, and their like have readers, probably more than they would have in any other country, but they represent only an eddy in the current.[1] Still, at present the number of these exotic and pastoral romances is great, much greater than their excellence. Such abundance is striking, for in France this genus was rare till Loti began to write, and the German development seems independent of England, which might have furnished helpful models.

It is a parlous thing to speak of foreign humor, and I forego any effort to analyze the art by which Wilhelm Raabe, in spite of his pessimistic resignation, manages to win a smile even from the seamy side of life. He lays his stories in out of the way villages, takes for his characters as out of the way people as Dickens, and treats them with as delightful minuteness, though his earlier stories, "Der Heilige Born" (1861) and "Die Horacker" (1872), have a fresher spirit than the later, which is strange when we consider the general course of German literature before and since the seventies. More boisterous than Raabe is Eckstein, who has made a specialty of studies of the comic side of school life, for whose bubbling humor one is disposed to thank him more than for his social or classical novels.

Perhaps the most remarkable living German humorist is Stinde. It is difficult to speak with moder-

[1] Schönbach, on the other hand, thinks Anzengrüber "of the highest merit;" his drama "Das Vierte Gebot," immortal; and the story "Sternsteinkopf," hardly inferior to the former.

ation of his photographic accuracy in the affectionate study of middle-class Berlin life. We look no longer through the red glasses of Lindau, but we see every-day life as we hope it is in many thousand homes in the city by the Spree. An account of the trip of the "Buchholz Family" to Italy opened the series in 1884. Then Frau Buchholz began to write letters to one of the Berlin papers, whose readers were gradually roused to see that a literary masterpiece was appearing where one is not wont to look for such, even in Germany. The letters were soon collected in a volume, and had a success hardly paralleled in a country where ten thousand counts as a hundred thousand in France. The "Buchholz Family" (1885) approached the larger figure, and a second part (1886) added to the author's success in this unique field, which a final volume (1887) could not more than maintain. These books have been done into English, though it is surprising that any one with wit enough to care to attempt it should not have had wit enough to let it alone. It is as if one should translate the "Biglow Papers" into French. He who has not learned Berlinese from the lips of one of themselves will hardly ever come to appreciate the racy flavor of Frau Buchholz's language. It is no such German as we ever saw in print before, but every line recalls to the initiated reader some memory of old student days. This was the way his landlady or his washerwoman used to talk, — the same dry humor, the same skeptical half-culture, the same keen worldly wisdom, the same colossal belief in Berlin. And the humor

is so fresh, so genial, so healthy, so different from the melancholy that pervades the books we have been considering since we left Freytag and his fellows. But, of course, after all this is only the play of genius.

If we turn to other fields of imaginative literature during this period, we shall find less originality, but a like spirit. In drama, except for the Realists, especially Wildenbruch and Sudermann, to whom there will be occasion to recur, translations or adaptations from the French predominate. The historical and patriotic drama has its representatives in Heyse, especially in his earlier period,[1] and in Ludwigs, Greif,[2] and Mosen.[3] Wilbrandt's "Krimhild" (1877) and Hebbel's "Nibelungen" (1863), have endeavored to give dramatic life to the heroic saga, and various "Lutherspiele" have tried the same for the German Reformation. But here, as with fiction, the tendency is strong toward the treatment of the social problems of modern life. Freytag opens the period of which we are treating with "Die Journalisten" (1854), on the whole perhaps the most artistically perfect of recent German comedies. The most significant of the later dramas of society are Heyse's "Hans Lange" (1866), "Die Maler," by Wilbrandt, and Fitger's tragic "Von Gottes Gnaden" (1883), and "Die Rosen von Tyburn" (1888). A place apart must be assigned to Anzengruber's peasant

[1] "Ludwig der Bayer" (1862), "Meleager" (1854), "Die Sabinnerinnen" (1859). His later dramas are less significant.

[2] E. g., "Prinz Eugen" (1880), "Heinrich der Löwe" (1886), "Konradin" (1888), "Ludwig der Bayer" (1891).

[3] E. g., "Otto der Dritte" and "Heinrich der Vögler."

dramas,[1] which have been hailed with incoherent admiration by some lovers of the eccentric, but seem to promise little for the development of art. Among the living writers of light comedy for the daily needs of a degenerate stage, the best — Blumenthal, Lindau, and L'Arronge[2] — are not remarkable, and all their humor has a touch of blighting irony.

Genuine epic poetry we should hardly look for in these days, and the few attempts are obvious failures. Here the most attractive field is naturally the old saga, which Karl Simrock has worked industriously in his popular translations of the "Nibelungen," "Gudrun," "Parzival," and other mediæval epics. More ambitious than he, and a truer poet, is Hertz, whose "Launcelot and Ginevra" (1860), "Hugdietrich's Brautfahrt" (1863), and "Tristan" (1877) are excellent as original antiquarian revivals. Jordan, too, has written a "Nibelunge" (1868–1874), and Lingg has essayed to treat the "Great Migration" in *ottave rime*.

More modern in character are Heyse's "Thekla" (1858) and Hebbel's "Mutter und Kind" (1859), while Hamerling's "Homunculus" represents the little trodden path of epic satire, though the other epics of this writer had been strictly historical, — "Ahasverus in Rom," treating of the times of Nero,

[1] For instance, "Der Fleck auf der Ehre," or "Meineidbauern."

[2] Among the most recent works of these men may be cited Blumenthal's "Der Zaungast" (1889), "Grossstadtluft" (1891), "Das Zweite Gesicht" (1890), Lindau's "Der Komödiant" (1892), "Der Andere" (1893); L'Arronge's "Heimchen" (1883), "Loreley" (1885), "Lolos Vater" (1893).

and "Der König von Sion," of the Anabaptist agitation in Münster. To still another category belong the popular narrative epics, in the spirit of "Ekkehard," some of which, in spite of their pseudo-mediævalism, have achieved remarkable popularity, and have filtered down to a stratum of the reading public that is not reached by the psychological novel.[1] And finally, that nothing may be wanting to the epic feast, the Naturalists have contributed their obolos in Hart's "Lied von der Menschheit," though there is a certain incongruity between this form of poetic expression and the tenets of their school.

It appears, then, that epic verse has still a hold on the masses, and, in its antiquarian development, a charm for the hypercultured, but it is not in touch with the moving forces of modern thought. Meantime, lyric poetry has had a somewhat similar fate. It has lost much of the freedom of form that made the charm of Heine, and, so far as it is not iconoclastic, is rather dreary reading. The Chauvinistic singers who beat *la grande caisse* so vigorously in 1870 — Geibel, Becker, Redwitz, and Jensen — are not read to-day, though they are occasionally sung by uncritical patriots. Freiligrath, who was associated with them, is saved from sharing this lot by some earlier pieces, while Hebbel's ballads and songs, and the minstrel lays of Scheffel's "Gaudeamus," are humbler

[1] For instance, Julius Wolff's "Wilder Jäger" reached its sixty-ninth edition in 1892, and his other narrative epics range from nineteen to fifty-nine thousand (Kürschner, 1894). "Dreizehnlinden," of the Roman Catholic Weber, is close behind with sixty thousand.

efforts, but genuinely and deservedly popular, — much more so than Heyse's more artificial verse, which best represents to-day the formal perfection of Platen and the grace of Heine, but shows rather a sensitively critical than a creative poetic spirit.

Perhaps it lies in the nature of our time, dominated by the practical interests of material development, that epic and lyric poetry should cease for a time to be the modes in which the average culture would find its literary expression, while the drama becomes less a means of moving men than of entertaining them. But we might at least, in such a case, look to a bold and positive criticism to lay bare the shortcomings of authorship, and show the causes of its weakness. As Goethe said, "we need a man like Lessing," — we need such fearless, deep-probing criticism as the "Dramaturgy," the "Literary Letters," or the "Laokoon." But the German criticism of our day has not risen to this high function. Rather, it has fallen into contempt. It is often venal, still oftener narrow, and far from those broad views that made the work of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller in this field truly constructive and helpful.

This is the excuse for being of a rebellious school, whose character has been just hinted in the word "iconoclastic," — a group that sometimes calls itself "Young Germany," with a reminiscence of 1848, and sometimes "The Realist School," though it should not be confounded with the like-named group in France. It has more and manifold points of contact with that Parisian coterie which rejoices in the name of

Decadent. At the head of this movement is Bleibtreu, more important as a critic than as an original writer, though he has resented the suggestion. Their organs have been the "Magazin für die Litteratur des In- und Auslandes" and "Die Gesellschaft." They are a rather numerous body of zealous young writers, born for the most part in the twenty years preceding the French war, who, in striking out new paths, begin with a wholesale condemnation of the old, especially of the "weak lemonade" and "sugar-water erotics" as Bleibtreu happily designates the lyrics of Scheffel, Geibel, and their like. These younger men mean to be strong; they often end in being coarse. It is the untutored zeal of the "Storm and Stress" over again. Would that a second classical period might follow it, but of that there is at this day no sign.

All these men, like the other discontented youth of Germany, are deeply tinged with socialism, — so deeply that some of their work is published in Switzerland to avoid the censorship. They are also, for the most part, violently, and rather incoherently, blasphemous, according to Christian standards; which, if it signify anything, must mean that Christianity is still Germany's strongest bulwark against social revolution. Holz proclaims himself, with characteristic modesty, "the Nazarite, the inborn son of Deity." Gradnauer says: "I am chosen, like Moses and Christ; I come to deliver." So, after all, it seems these men recognize the Deity against whom, like fallen spirits, they rebel. With this attitude to religion, they will naturally be iconoclasts in other fields.

Most characteristic of these writers is their thorough belief in themselves. Bleibtreu makes bold to declare, "I neither see now, nor shall I ever see, any reason to change my opinions." This is in his preface to the "Literary Revolution." Again, in the "Kampf ums Dasein der Literatur," we learn that realism "has three stages, which best show themselves in their chief representatives, the lyric in Liliencron, the fresh, natural, full-blooded painter of feeling; the epic in Kretzer, the socialistic novelist; the dramatic in its widest sense, embracing the lyric, epic, and psychologic-philosophic, in — myself." Further on, he says that his novel "Dies Irae" "will hardly ever be surpassed in its symbolic significance, and fulfils completely all the artistic laws of the newly created genre." And yet, in spite of this rodomontade, Bleibtreu is a genius.

He and his fellows run amuck at the current literature because it is conventional, and addressed in the main to the ladies of society, whose minds he thinks by nature emasculate. The new literature must gird itself to deal with antagonisms of race and great questions of social order. Its realism is to be Shakspere's, not Zola's. Critics not of his shibboleth he treats with a contempt so fierce as to be almost laughable, and yet there is a vigor and brilliancy in Bleibtreu's pamphlets that we hardly find paralleled to-day in Germany.

Not content with revolutionizing lyric poetry, this school has laid violent hands on the novel. In historic fiction Bleibtreu has made the wars of the two

Napoleons his peculiar field. "Dies Irae" (1882), "a realistic epic of the world's history," deals with the French war, and, in its graphic picture of Sedan, affords interesting material for comparison with Zola's "Débâcle." The same versatile writer has given us a Nibelungen story (1884), of which he allows that "the technique is incomplete," and has attempted the exotic in "Norway Tales" (1883). He has also done striking work in historic literary criticism.

Far less extravagant than Bleibtreu, though essentially of his school, is Wildenbruch, who in his dramas has tried to do for the national spirit what Dahn and Freytag have done in their novels. "Die Quitzows" (1888), "Die Karolinger" (1882), and "Der Neue Herr" (1891) are remarkable literary expressions of the personified Prussian spirit. In short stories, too, and in his social dramas, Wildenbruch shows great originality in tragic development.[1] Another dramatist of as great power, and perhaps greater promise, is Sudermann, whose "Ehre" (1890) and "Sodom's Ende" (1891), achieved sensational success, while "Heimat," his last drama (1893), attained thirteen editions in a single year.[2] His best novels, "Frau Sorge" (1887), "Katzensteg" (1889), and "Iolanthe's Hochzeit"

[1] For instance, "Die Astronomen" (1887), "Vor den Schranken" (1885), "Franceska von Rimini" (1893); Die Haubenlerche (1892).

[2] Other noteworthy dramatists and dramas of this school are Hauptmann, "Die Weber" (1892); Richard Voss, "Neue Zeit" (1891), "Malaria" (1892), "Jürg Jenatsch" (1893), Wunderkind (1892); Fulda, "Die Sklavin" (1891), "Das Verlorene Paradies" (1891); Kirchbach, "Die Waiblinger" (1886).

(1892), are hardly less admirable in technique and power, coupled, in the last case, with original humor of a high order. He is certainly the most promising of the new Realists, for the novels of Sudermann have shown a steady growth in clearness of vision and firmness of touch, — as is only natural, since the author was but thirty years old when "Frau Sorge" was published.[1] This is a pathetic Odyssey of duty, strong in its psychological analysis so far as the immediate family of the hero are concerned, but not satisfactory in its climax, and showing serious romantic aberrations in the minor characters, and in the katabasis of the closing chapter. The two years that followed brought the declaration of independence of the new school in Bleibtreu's pamphlets,[2] and witnessed a marked crystallization in Sudermann's literary conceptions and methods. He seems to have passed through the experience, and come to the vision, that he attributes to the hero of "Katzensteg," the magnanimous Boseslav, to whom, as his tragic fate closed around him, it had seemed "as though the mists were lifted that separated the basis of human being from that of human consciousness, as though he could see a step deeper than men are wont to do into the abyss of the unknown. What men

[1] A hint in the dedicatory verses suggests that the story was written in the year of its publication. It had been preceded by the less significant "Im Zwielicht," and followed in the next year (1888) by "Die Geschwister," which also offers no special occasion for critical comment.

[2] "Revolution in der Literatur" (1887), "Kamp ums Dasein der Literatur" (1888).

call 'good' and 'evil' floated before him anchorless on superficial mists; below them rested, in slumbering strength, the Natural."

Thus Sudermann makes his literary profession of faith. But the high-minded pessimism of "Der Katzensteg" has since yielded to the serener philosophy of life that brightens "Iolanthe's Hochzeit." Satire, indeed, there is still, and it is still keen beyond the common; but it is less fierce, less pessimistic, more kindly. There were no such ghastly touches in "Katzensteg" as those that the funeral of Paul's mother afforded in "Frau Sorge;" there was less that was persistently harrowing, more of the tragic conflict of a noble soul with fate. Yet there, too, all was still sombre and stern. But in "Iolanthe's Hochzeit" we have turned from abnormal realism to the realism of common life, to what is within the range of ordinary experience and sympathy; we breathe freer, we feel more at home. This last of Sudermann's stories, though a shorter and less ambitious effort, yields nothing in its seriousness of psychological analysis to the earlier and longer novels. It leaves as deep an impression and a pleasanter memory.

The most thorough-going writers in the new school are the dramatist Hauptmann, who is the most brutal of the group, but not without power, and Kretzer, "another whom Zola has quite spoiled," as a dyspeptic critic tells us, — a man of remarkable strength in portraying the fierce instincts of the proletariat, and a pessimist with much bitterness of indignation at

what seem to him social wrongs. "Such strength of soul-painting, such depth of characterization, such power of passion, such reckless energy and dauntlessness in the poetic grasp of the most fearful sufferings and sins, such a Shaksperian tragic sweep, has never yet been seen in German literature," says Bleibtreu,[1] and there is truth mingled with the obvious exaggeration. The titles of his novels are significant: "The Deceived" (1882), "The Ruined" ("Die Verkommenen," 1883), "The Socialist Tornado" (1883), "Three Women" (1886), — this last perhaps the best of all, unless we prefer "Meister Timpe" (1888). But it is foolish to presume to measure Kretzer with Zola. He shares with the great Frenchman a certain carelessness in rhetoric; he makes new words and misuses old ones, as does Zola. "Germinal" and "Die Verkommenen" offer the nearest subjects of comparison, but Kretzer never attains Zola's wide sweep and epic grandeur. Other writers of fiction in the Naturalistic school are Hartleben, Von Roberts, and Kirchbach, all of whom have attempted the drama also.

Indeed, the zeal with which these men have seized on the stage as a means of literary propagandism is remarkable. In Berlin they have organized a theatrical club that there may be a "Freie Bühne," a stage independent of the police censorship, where all theories may be tried and threshed out before a critical public. And yet it is doubtful if this labor is not in vain, doubtful if the drama can ever be made a great social or reforming power in an age when

[1] "Revolution in der Literatur" (1887), p. 37.

primary education and the newspaper are within the reach of all classes of society to which the theatre could possibly appeal. Hence it is probable, unless unforeseen events produce some great change in the spirit of the time, that the development of literature will for the present be chiefly in the direction of prose fiction; and therefore it is encouraging to find that just here there is the greatest independence of foreign influence, the greatest individuality, and the greatest hope of healthy development in the æsthetic taste of the German nation.

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